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No helmet can protect the wearer against all foreseeable impacts. Nothing is a substitute for safe riding practices.

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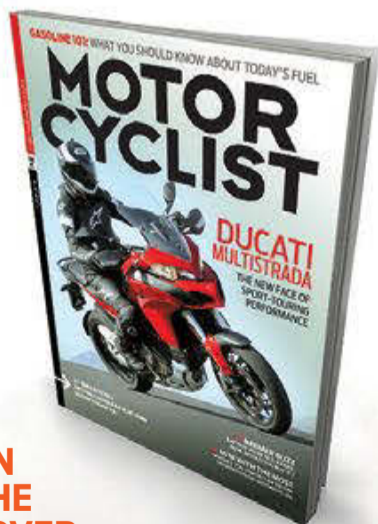
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IN THE GARAGE Jeff Maddox, Jerry Smith

#### ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN

ART DIRECTOR Kathleen Conner

#### PHOTO AND VIDEO SERVICES

PHOTOGRAPHER Jeff Allen  
VIDEO PRODUCER Spenser Robert

#### CONTRIBUTORS

Mitch Boehm, Mike Calabro, Andy Cherney, Ken Condon, Jan Harde, Barry Hathaway, Ken Lee, Rich Lee, Brian MacLean, Milagro, Brian J. Nelson, Brian Nitto, Tim Sutton, Bill Wenger, Kevin Wing

#### EDITORIAL OFFICES

PHONE: (760) 707-0100  
MAIL: 15215 Alton Pkwy., Suite 100, Irvine, CA 92618  
EMAIL: mcmal@bonniercorp.com

#### REPRINTS

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#### RETAIL SINGLE COPY SALES

ProCirc Retail Solutions Group, Tony DiBisceglie

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#### ADVERTISING

VICE PRESIDENT, GROUP PUBLISHER Andy Leisner  
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, AD DIRECTOR Libby Vevers (415) 671-8861  
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, MARKETING Garrett Kai  
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# CULTURE AND THE MANUFACTURING ETHOS

**M**otorcycle culture from the manufacturing side has always been a minor fascination for me—to watch how each maker approaches a market segment and how each decides to compete. With today's worldwide manufacturing resources, it's not like the Japanese companies have an inherent advantage in one area and, say, the Europeans another. They'll ship CNC machines, design consoles, and talent anywhere a truck can go.

The products we ride every month represent a combination of manufacturing capability, design ethos, market research (and interpretation thereof), and, to a strong degree, internal cultural bias. It's like the questions are: Who are we as a company, and why do we make products the way we do?

Some of that comes from tribal knowledge that transcends documentation. For example, several of the engineers and development test riders I know from book projects involving Ducati and Suzuki are still at their posts. Having spoken with them, sometimes at great length, I feel like I can sense their hands on the product, even as far down the food chain as a finished motorcycle. They are truly skilled development engineers all, but it's also fair to say each has a bias or maybe a set of preferences that do ultimately inform the product.

**“Culture in a motorcycle company is more ingrained, more complicated than one player can effectively influence, of course.”**

Culture in a motorcycle company is more ingrained, more complicated than one player can effectively influence, of course. I sense that most of all from Ducati, whose predilection to sportbikes runs deep. Even models that aren't pure sportbikes—the Multistrada and the Scrambler, for example—have not just stylistic attributes of street-going racers but some of their very mannerisms.

I just spent a couple of days on the Scrambler, a bike whose appearance I like and whose price is fantastic, just \$8,500. But as I understand the marketing here, the Scrambler is supposed to appeal to the same buyer as the Triumph Bonneville, the urban, ironic, modern rider who wants a “genuine” experience on a back-to-basics machine. Many of them are new to the sport. And yet, in my view, the Scrambler's suspension is far too stiff, and the throttle response is off-the-charts too abrupt. If someone of my experience has to concentrate on riding smoothly, what's it going to be like for the true beginner?

There's no question that the Scrambler would be a better motorcycle with smoother throttle response and softer suspension—especially for the intended buyers. But would it be a Ducati? Ducati's aren't soft; they're taut, eager, and ready to jet forward at the slightest command. If the Scrambler were all marshmallow-like, would it still be a Ducati? I think that's a question asked often during development, and there was a conscious decision to give it this hard edge.

I have a similar reaction to the Suzuki GSX-S750 reviewed in this issue. As the former owner of a 2005 GSX-R750, I was

hoping for some of the super-sport's aggressiveness and visceral thrill. It's not there in the -S, and I know why. Marketing wants to create a clear wedge between the GSX-S and the true GSX-R; one cannot encroach on the other's territory. Too bad. Were it up to me, I'd shoehorn in a full-strength GSX-R750 engine and tell the guys in fuel injection

**The photos—ours and the brochure's—say gritty urban sport-bike, but the GSX-S's manners are, by intent, far more sedate.**

to clamp down on the secondaries for markets where licensing or taxation demands something close to 100 hp. Little to no engineering required. Then you could let the crazy-ass Americans have the full dose—127 rear-wheel horsepower or so. The GSX-S would then be an epically fun bike for \$7,999. Simple, right? I guess it's telling that for all the time I've spent in Hamamatsu, no one from Suzuki has ever asked for a résumé.



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# Water-cooled Bonneville

Triumph's New Modern Classic Spied!

COMING SOON?



**Future variations of the next-generation Bonnie will almost certainly include café racer, scrambler, and cruiser derivatives, as well as an up-spec "Street Tracker."**

The current Triumph Bonneville, launched in 2000, has been the vanguard of the retro movement, and the firm has reaped the rewards ever since, driving huge sales and becoming the face of modern classics. But 15 years is a long run with only minor updates, even for a bike designed to look old, and this is our first sight of the bike that will fill its shoes. So how has Triumph redesigned a retro? By making it even more authentic looking while simultaneously bringing its performance in line with much more modern bikes.

While the styling isn't surprising, the big news about the new Bonneville, which our photographer caught on test near the firm's base in England, is the engine. Look between the header pipes; where the current bike has a small oil cooler, there's a much larger radiator here, suggesting that the new motor is at least partially water-cooled. It's the same route that BMW has taken with its latest boxer twin and one that Harley is following on some new models, using "precision" water-cooling in the cylinder heads to give better control of the engine's temperature.

The engine itself is believed to be somewhere in the region of 1,100cc, a significant increase over the current 865cc twin, and together with its new design the result should be something in the region of 90 to 100 hp while retaining a low-revving, torquey state of tune.

Just as much work has gone into the engine's appearance as its technology, which will include ride-by-wire throttle, opening the door to options like traction control. On the outside, the cases are close replicas of the original Bonneville's—it looks much more like a 1960s bike than the current version does. On the cylinder head, the exhaust exits are mounted at an angle and the header pipes are attached with finned aluminum collars, just as they are on the original Bonnie.

Word is that the transmission will also be entirely new, with six speeds instead of the current five, and the whole powertrain is mounted in a redesigned frame. It's still made of steel, but, again, its lines are more like an original Bonneville's than the current generation. The same applies to the fuel tank, seat, and side panels, and

even the taillight has been designed to replicate a 1960s design.

The suspension remains old school too, with twin shocks and a conventional fork, but one spin-off from the new Bonnie will be a modernized model, likely to be called the Street Tracker, which uses an upside-down Öhlins fork, remote reservoir Öhlins shocks, and Brembo radial-mount calipers along with sportbike-size tires to take the fight to modernized retros like Norton's latest Commando models. Regardless of their old-fashioned looks, all versions will have ABS.

It will take at least two or three years for all the varieties to emerge, suggesting that the current 865cc motor will live on for a while in some models. The exact launch date of the new bike is unknown. At least one version is expected to appear before the end of this year and reach production as a 2016 model.

—Ben Purvis

**"One spin-off from the new Bonnie will be a modernized model, likely to be called the Street Tracker."**

# KTM's V-4 Future

**KTM Is Building a V-4 Superbike, But Will You Be Able To Ride It On the Street?**

It's no secret KTM is working on a V-4-powered sportbike, and now we've seen photographs of what appears to be a KTM factory test rider aboard a modified—and heavily disguised—Aprilia Tuono V4 R. Despite the fact that KTM appears to be gathering baseline data from a competitive streetbike, comments from KTM President Stefan Pierer in a recent interview with *Motorcyclist* contributor Alan Cathcart suggest the Austrian manufacturer's new superbike won't be street legal at all.

"Let's be honest," Pierer said. "If your superbike is reaching 200 horsepower, it's impossible to argue that it belongs on the street. It really doesn't." Pierer outlined a plan where KTM would produce a V-4-powered MotoGP prototype for the 2017 racing season and offer a customer



version for closed-course use only. "We'll call it the RC16," Pierer said, "and it will also be available to the normal customer for private use on track, but it won't be homologated for the street."

Pierer says KTM might build 100 to 200 units of the RC16, selling for somewhere between \$100,000 to \$200,000, with a "near-90-degree" V-4 in a steel-tube trellis frame. Unfortunately, this sounds like the end of street-legal superbikes from KTM. "As soon as the RC16 is available for customers we will stop with the RC8. With the increase in safety concerns, I'm afraid bikes like this don't belong on the street, only on a closed course."

It's not clear what KTM is up to, but considering the recent string of cutting-edge, world-class motorcycles rolling out of Austria, it's hard not to be excited about what's coming next.

—Aaron Frank, with reporting by Alan Cathcart



## BMW E-BOXER

**Twin-Motor, Battery-Powered Bavarian "Boxer"**

Electric bikes have come a long way in the last few years, but they still struggle to match the aesthetics of a gas-powered machine—particularly without bodywork.

Electric motors are just boring to look at, and after more than a century of motorcycles designed to emphasize the mechanical beauty of their engines it's hard to let go of that. But BMW's latest development could be a solution to that issue.

The firm is already a leading light in the electric-bike movement as the only one of the established manufacturers to have an electric offering already on sale in the form of its C Evolution scooter. Its latest design reveals that it's been working on an electric motorcycle that mimics the visual appeal of its traditional boxer-twin engines.

The idea is simply to attach two electric motors to a central transmission, with one poking out each side of the bike just like the cylinders on a boxer twin. The transmission rotates their drive by 90 degrees to allow the use of a shaft drive, again in conventional BMW style. To boost the look, and to take advantage of the fact the motors are hanging out of the sides of the bike, the patent indicates that air-cooled motors are likely to be used, complete with functional cooling fins on their aluminum cases, which would help complete the illusion.

As well as looking more interesting than a single-motor design, the BMW layout offers practical advantages. The two motors can be smaller than a single one while providing the same output, and they'll have a lower center of gravity in this configuration. The design also suggests that when there's relatively little load on the motors, the transmission could be arranged to allow one motor to disengage and stop entirely, reducing friction and helping improve the bike's range compared to a single-motor layout.

The sketches accompanying the firm's patent application are simplistic in the extreme, giving little clue as to the machine's final look, but given its commitment to electric power, not just on the C Evolution but also on its i3 and i8 cars, it would be no surprise to see a BMW electric bike in prototype, or even production, form in the very near future. —Ben Purvis



**If hiding cooling units or ECUs is an issue, expect a small upper fairing for the eBoxer.**



**Long overdue for a new flagship superbike is Suzuki, whose recent re-entrance into MotoGP competition has pundits predicting a GSX-RR superbike that adapts Grand Prix technology for the street. Several patents suggesting just that have already been submitted.**

# 6 QUESTIONS WITH: Nicky Hayden

We Pose Your Questions to the American MotoGP Champion

A few weeks back we asked our loyal Facebook fans to give us their best questions for 2006 MotoGP World Champion Nicky Hayden. Here's what our fans came up with:



JEFF ALLEN

» **Jeffrey Roy Cayanan Villamil asks:** Do you have a pre-race ritual?

**NICKY HAYDEN:** I have a routine, for sure. I mean, I normally eat at the same time, do the same warm-up, the same stretch, go through the same things with my team, for the most part. I have a routine but no certain dance or voodoo or anything like that. But if I think something will help me... I'm a little bit superstitious; my dad was very superstitious. So if I had a good warm-up in the morning, I might want to make sure I wore that same helmet or the same gloves. Or if there was a certain song on the iPod before warm-up I might make sure that was on repeat while I'm suiting up. We [racers] will try anything if we think it'll make us faster.

» **Kishore D.B. Singham wants to know:** How much has your riding style changed to suit the current generation of RCs compared to your 2006 championship-winning bike?

**NH:** For sure, things changed a lot, especially with the Bridgestone tires. At that point [2006] we were using Michelins, and with the Bridgestones the braking changed a lot, especially how late you could brake into the corner and use the front tire even more; that was their strong point. And the way it needed load; you needed to stay on the brake to help it turn. I would say that's the biggest thing, more related to the tire than the actual bike. At that time there weren't many electronics, so you could steer more with the rear and use the gas to turn the bike, which now doesn't happen as much. You can, in the right situation, but not as much.

» **James Koch asked:** What do you think about motorcycle culture in general and the bad attitude that people sometimes associate with it?

**NH:** Well, I think motorcycle culture is great! I love it. I mean, I grew up with bikes. It's in my blood, and I love it. There are, I guess, some stereotypes, you know, when I was a kid and would tell the teacher I'm taking off school to go race a motorcycle, that wasn't a good way to get on the teacher's good side! It's a shame, though, because sometimes the only time motorcycles are front-page news is for something bad. I guess it's like anything; you've got to take the good with the bad.

» **Will France wants to know:** How do you feel about being the only American in MotoGP?

**NH:** Well, in one regard I feel a lot of privilege and a lot of excitement and want to do a good job for my country, and I definitely feel a lot of support. On the other hand I wish we had more Americans now, not just in GP but on all world levels. So, that's something, in the future, that I want to help do, especially when I'm done, is help develop young talent and give kids the opportunity because we're definitely in a low spot. It wasn't long ago that Americans were dominating, so hopefully it won't be too long before that happens again.

» **Scott Koenig asks:** If you had to choose one kind of racing of all the different types you have done, which one would you choose?

**NH:** I like GP. People think, "Aww, it's just 'cause the money's better,"

but truthfully I love the stage; I love the international level. I mean, if I had one race to race, it probably would be Peoria TT. But I like GPs because I like going against the international riders. I like the excitement of it, the prestige. I don't know. I've ridden a lot of kinds of motorcycles; I've ridden motocross, flat track, enduro, trials, and I've yet to find one I don't really like.

» **Sky Azrael asks:** Would you ever come back to America to race?

**NH:** Well, I don't know what's going to happen down the road. This season will be my 13th year in GP. I love racing at the highest level, in the deepest waters, on the best bikes, on the best tracks, but we'll see. My dirt-track career, you know, I do have a little bit of unfinished business there, to try to win a mile. But I'm realistic too! I know the longer I'm away... It's going to get harder. I've spent some time this winter doing some flat track with some Grand National guys and relit a little bit of fire to see that my dirt-track speed hadn't gotten too far away from me, so it was nice to see that. Riding a mile is a completely different game, but, yeah, we'll see what happens down the road. Anything's possible. I would say my interest in flat track never really went away. That was my first love, but I don't regret going road racing. I'm really glad that I had the opportunity to go, and see the world, and be a world champion. But still, that grand slam is something that does haunt me—trying to win a Short-Track, TT, Half-Mile, and Mile.



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## Arch Motorcycle Company KRGT-1

### The Matrix of Machined Metalwork

“I don’t make sissy bars, but why don’t you come inside and we’ll see what we can do,” said LA County Choprods design guru Gard Hollinger back in 2006 when Keanu Reeves rolled into Hollinger’s shop with some ideas on how he wanted to customize his Harley-Davidson Dyna.

Reeves’ Dyna project served as the matrix for a power-cruiser prototype that became the KRGT-1 seen here. Technically, the KRGT-1 is a production motorcycle, but aside from Arch’s plans to produce a limited quantity (as many as 100) of these luxury V-twins this year, everything else about this retro-mod machine says pure custom. The obsessive level of effort and detail add up to a base price of \$78,000.

Yes, you read that right: a no-haggle price tag of 78 large with a \$12K cash deposit just to get the build-to-order process in motion. “Sure, we can make it cheaper,” Hollinger says. “We can also make it more expensive. That figure that we decided on doesn’t even begin to cover the years of R&D, the materials, and prototyping of each special part that went into this bike. If we can sell 50 of them over the course of the year, we’ll be happy.” Plans are already underway to add two more models to the KRGT line. It’s hush-hush for now, but you’ll see it here when it happens.

—Brian Hatano



Powering the KRGT-1 is a proprietary S&S Cycle T124 V-twin featuring a downdraft fuel-injection system. A K&N filtered intake is hidden under the backbone between the machined fuel-tank halves. This design centers weight and significantly narrows the distance between the rider’s knees. Clever.



Word around the water cooler is that Honda is finally set to debut a new CBR1000RR. Skeptics claim it will only be an updated version of the current bike, but some sources in Europe are claiming Big Red has an all-new CBR ready to break cover.

## Benelli’s 500cc “GS”

### Chinese-Designed ADV Twin Spied!

It’s a long way from being the sort of beauty that you might expect from Benelli, but these leaked pictures reveal the designs for a new 500cc parallel-twin adventure bike that’s under development at the firm’s Chinese parent company.

The Benelli-branded brake calipers and the fact that the engine is visually identical to the recently launched 300cc Benelli BN302 show that while this bike has been created by Qianjiang in China, it’s destined to use the storied Benelli badge when it reaches production.

Although the engine shares its castings with the BN302, the new bike’s code name, BJ500GS, reveals that this is a 500cc variant. Given that the BN302 claims 38 hp, it’s likely that the 500cc version will be able to hit

the 47-hp limit that certain European motorcycle licenses are restricted to. All good so far.

The styling, however, is a mess at best. This image shows a styling mock-up, painted white on the left-hand side and blue on the right to demonstrate its appearance in different color schemes, but the bodywork is a riot of shapes and angles, none of which seem to fit with the next. There’s clearly a bit of Multistrada in there, and a dash of BMW GS, but the result is less than beautiful. Fortunately, there’s still time for it to be restyled before it hits the market.

When it does, while it’s likely to be branded as a Benelli in many countries, it could also be offered under several other brands under which Qianjiang also sells bikes.

—Ben Purvis



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JOE GRESH



# VIVA ESPAÑA

Turn off La Rambla and the walls close in while the blue sky rises to form narrow, geometric lanes. Doorways emit the aroma of meaty leather goods: purses and belts that seem cured, not tanned. Cigarette smoke is everywhere, along with the sound of shattering glass as last night's bottles crash into trash bins. Befuddled tourists step over wooden thresholds trimmed with brass strips worn smooth by centuries of commerce. Countless cobbles slope inward toward the alleyway groin, punctuated occasionally with wrought-iron drain grates that carry away the busy city's never-ending seep.

This is Barcelona's Gothic Quarter, a claustrophobic, 1,000-year-old warren that also contains a small, medieval motorcycle museum, The Museu Moto Barcelona, ensconced on the ground floor of the old Sant Felip Neri Convent. Nuns on motorcycles—talk about an irresistible juxtaposition.

For most of the last century, it seems like Spain took the wrong path at every historical crossroad. Yet through all the constant turmoil, Spain's fanatical motorcycle industry, numbering well more than 80 different marques from Aleu to Villalbi, just kept on pumping out bikes. And when the Iberian brands weren't busy designing their own motorcycles, they

**“Nuns on motorcycles—talk about an irresistible juxtaposition.”**

stayed occupied building licensed copies of Ducatis, Moto Guzzis, Hondas, and Yamahas.

It's easy to walk past the Museu's discreet glass entrance, a black arch holding tons of stone overhead. Inside, the Museu is divided into three display rooms all connected by a long, L-shaped hallway. A clockwise stroll begins with Spain's earliest motorcycles, charmingly crude machines with crankcase castings so rough you'd think the foundry used coarse gravel instead of sand.

The tail end of Franco's dictatorship corresponded with the golden years of Spanish motorcycle racing, when brands like Derbi, practically unknown in the US, ruled the 50cc, 80cc, and 125cc GP classes in the late 1960s and early '70s. Spanish motocross bikes—which were slightly better known on our shores—won many races too, and Museu Moto catalogs this world-beating era completely.

More interesting to me, however, are the dozens of other Iberian motorcycle manufacturers who were not so successful—bikes that never won races and were never sold in the US but that are still fascinating, like the Arisco twin-crank roadracers. How did we miss out on an entire food chain of Latin moto technology?

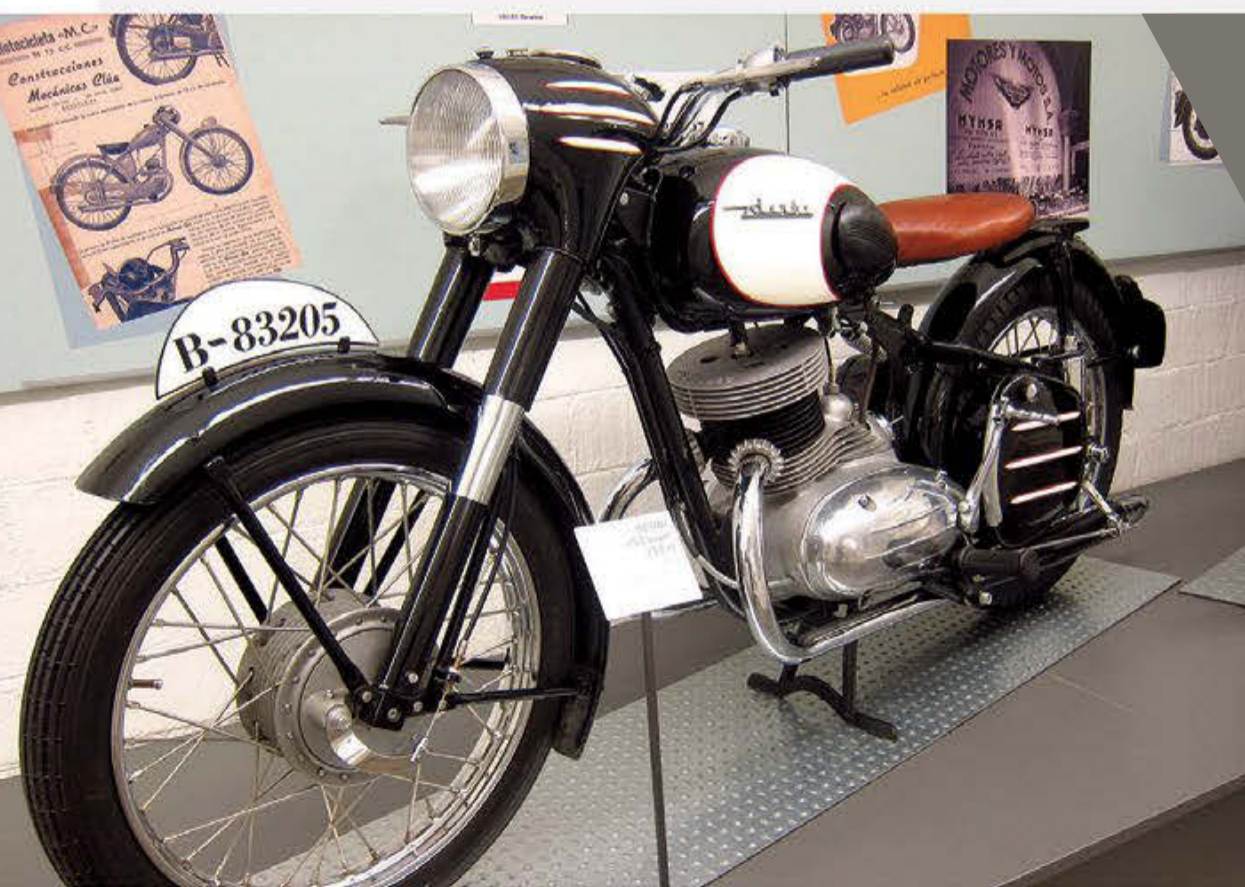
Good luck learning much about these bikes, however. The Museu's displays would benefit greatly from a bit more information. Horsepower or performance figures of any sort would be nice, and the bikes are obscure enough that an impromptu smartphone search turns up little.

Of the “Big Three” Spanish brands that achieved any notoriety in the US—Ossa, Bultaco, and Montessa—only Ossa

survives today. Spain has not given up on motorcycle production, however. Newer Spanish makes such as Gas Gas, Beta, and Sherco coexist happily alongside Rieju and Derbi, all strange and wonderful motorcycles still built and ridden largely under our American radar.

Re-emerging into the mazelike Gothic Quarter it can be hard to tell where the Museu Moto ends and real life begins. Two-stroke scooters buzz down every street. This city of 4.5 million people runs on premix, baby. Tiny, 50cc Supermotards park beside classically beautiful, daily ridden Metrallas. You'll be disoriented, directionless, maybe even pick-pocketed, but if you're a motorcycle nut it's impossible not to fall in love with Barcelona.

**Bikes like this charming post-war Derbi are typical of what you'll see at Barcelona's Museu Moto: classic, slightly quirky, utterly unfamiliar to American eyes.**



*Even as a zygote, young Mr. Gresh could be heard making vroom-vroom motorcycle noises, albeit very quietly as his mouthparts had not yet formed. It only got worse over time. Now, there's no way to stop his incessant bleating about motorcycles, especially if the topic turns to vintage Yamaha two-strokes.*

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# CHANGING DIRECTION

A motorcycle has six controls—front and rear brakes, throttle, clutch, shift lever, and handlebars—all dedicated to changing either speed or direction of travel. When it comes to riding a motorcycle, that is all a rider can do. When making speed and direction changes, there are only two errors that can occur: 1) Changing speed and/or direction at the wrong location in space, or 2) Changing speed and/or direction in the wrong amount, i.e. too much or too little.

Confidently controlling a motorcycle begins with a decision to arrive at some precise location in space. The decision to arrive somewhere first requires accurately identifying that space you chose to occupy. To begin moving toward that space requires knowledge of your current location.

Knowing your own location requires a minimum of two external reference points. Having two external reference points provides depth perception, which gives scope and perspective to space. Having scope and perspective allows you to plot an approach line to your chosen location.

Having an approach line *and* depth perception provides an accurate perception of your speed and any changes to that. Once you have an approach line and an accurate perception of your speed, you can determine the rate and degree of direction change needed to arrive at your chosen space.

“Adding even a little speed can disrupt a rider’s perceptions enough to disable their sense of timing...”

An accurate perception of speed, approach line, and destination allows you to accurately predict your time until arrival. With time of arrival known you can begin preparing for your next action, which frees up attention to re-evaluate your line, available traction, lean angle, and speed. When traction, line, lean angle, time of arrival, and speed are all being adequately tracked and evaluated, the rider is in control, and the chosen location is arrived at with confidence.

This sequence of events might appear complicated, yet our capacity to execute these steps all within the time of a heartbeat or less can play out a thousand times in one ride. It’s easy to take these points for granted, as they rightfully seem quite natural, but while the pattern itself is innately robust, it is also fragile. Any one of a rider’s primary enemies—target fixation, tunnel vision, or frenetic scanning, for example—can easily unhinge this process.

Speed alone can be enough to prevent a rider from smoothly completing the loop of tasks necessary to accurately control a motorcycle. In a rider-training course designed and conducted by The California Superbike School over a seven-year period, we discovered some interesting trends. During that time, 1,100 street riders made roughly 20,000 runs through a cone-divided slalom course. The drill was performed at 15, 20, 25, and 30 mph, with each run monitored by radar for accuracy. We found with every 5 mph increase in speed, 95 percent of riders lost touch with their basic steering skills. (For comparison, the cone course was found to be negotiable at 40 mph by a top-tier rider with just one or, in some cases, no practice runs; it took average street riders sometimes as many as seven attempts, even at lower speeds.)

**Quick direction changes are an essential street skill, whether maneuvering around cones or unexpected objects in the road.**

Adding even a little speed can disrupt a rider’s perceptions enough to disable his sense of timing, even after that rider has demonstrated the ability to coordinate the necessary steering-control actions at a slower speed. At 15 mph we travel 22 feet per second; at

20 mph that number is 29 feet per second—adding one bike length per second is more than enough to disrupt our confidence and performance in technical—or, you might say, critical—riding situations.

Your ability to quick-turn your bike to the proper lean angle even a quarter of a second faster can make the difference between hitting a wheel-bending pothole—or a car entering your lane—or avoiding it and carrying on with a self-satisfied grin of accomplishment. Work on it.



Keith Code, credited as the father of modern track schools, founded his California Superbike School in 1980 and currently operates programs in 11 countries and on six continents. His A Twist of the Wrist series of books (and DVDs) are thought by many to be the bible of cornering.



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# BALANCE OF POWER

I'm sure I'm not the only one captivated by new bikes promising to be the fastest, the most powerful, the most innovative, or the most whatever. There's nothing wrong with checking out the new stuff, but there's a downside: Some interesting developments that might deserve attention inevitably get relegated to the shadows. In my case, I've been neglecting parallel twins for years, despite the fact that I grew up on them. Parallel twins tend to disappear in the shadows behind 200-hp superbikes and six-cylinder tourers.

I was recently doing research for the design of a midsize, mid-performance bike using belt final drive. This research led me to BMW's F800 line, powered by a parallel twin with a 360-degree crank, dual overhead cams with finger followers, and belt drive. But what really captured my attention was the balancer. I saw significant innovation hiding in the details of these less-than-super bikes.

The F800 engine uses a balancing mechanism that's basically a weight hanging from a connecting rod bolted to a third crankshaft journal, one located between and 180 degrees opposite the two big end journals. This

balance weight moves in the opposite direction from the pistons, going down as the pistons rise. The balance weight pivots back and under the transmission, so while its movement is not straight up and down like the pistons, the long arc defined by that pivot makes it pretty close.

This balancer arrangement is superficially similar to that of the Ducati Supermono, which used a V-twin crank and second connecting rod to drive a balance weight composed of a short pivoting arm—but that balanced a single, not a twin. It's more similar to the Yamaha T-Max maxiscooter. Like the F800, this uses a third connecting rod between the laydown parallel-twin's two cylinder rods, but this rod faces straight back at the transmission and drives a heavy "slave" piston sliding in its own bore as a balance weight.

Another parallel-twin balancing act I considered was Triumph's dual counter-rotating balance shafts—one ahead of and one behind the crankshaft—as employed in the retro Bonneville twin. This is what I would have called the "standard" solution before undertaking this reconsideration. The

final option is the mechanism employed on the Yamaha FZ-07. This parallel twin uses a single rotating balance shaft; perhaps a second shaft isn't needed because balancing duties for this "crossplane concept" engine, with its 270-degree crank and uneven firing interval, are quite different from the more typical, 180-degree parallel twin.

So here we have four balancing schemes for four parallel twins in four very different bikes. Why go to all the trouble if it takes such a range of mechanisms to smooth these shaky parallel-twin engines? It's all about packaging. As power demands rise and noise regulations get more restrictive, components like airboxes and mufflers get bigger. Electronic systems proliferate as buyers demand more features. This all has to go into the same space, and the compact parallel twins are an attractive compromise, not much bigger than a single, but with more power and—assuming proper balancing—more smoothness.

Is there one "best" way to balance a parallel twin? BMW's reciprocating balancer is probably the most efficient in terms of energy use, while Triumph's dual gear-driven balance shafts are likely the least efficient. The balance shaft solutions probably add less weight overall than the reciprocating versions, however. Suffice it to say that a parallel twin must be smoothed, and just how that's done might not be the most important issue.

For me, one thing is clear: I had some catching up to do. In the future I'll be giving parallel twins the attention they deserve.

"Why go to all the trouble to smooth out these shaky parallel-twin engines? It's all about packaging."



**BMW's clever counter-balancing solution (above); a crank weight, pivoting aft, moves up and down opposite the pistons.**



*James Parker designed his first original motorcycle in 1971; his most recent design is the Mission R electric superbike. In between, he worked on multiple other motorcycle projects, including 30 years spent evolving the RADD front suspension system used on the Yamaha GTS1000 and various other prototypes.*

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## The Original ADV, All of Joe Gresh's Relatives Write, In Defense of Al Gunter.

### OH, MANN, THAT'S GOING TO LEAVE A MARK

I loved Aaron Frank's feature "Mann's Machine" (April, *MC*), though I think one dead person, Al Gunter, probably rolled over in his grave from the faint praise as a "famed Brit-bike tuner." Gunter is, in fact, an AMA Hall of Fame-elected racer and was a three-time winner of the Ascot 8-Mile National that used to run in Gardena. His was one of two names mentioned to me by Dick Mann when I asked him who his racing heroes were when he started racing on the National circuit (the other is Dick Dorresteyn).

But fair enough, Gunter could for sure tune his racebikes as well and was a mentor to a younger Dick Mann and helped teach Dick how the game was played. I remember well Mann's success on the black NGK Matchless in 1964. My older brother Bob was racing the AMA Nationals then. I was only 13. But that summer of 1964, Bob planned to go "back East" to race the Springfield Mile and a 150-mile roadrace National at a track called Meadowdale, northwest of Chicago. Since I was on summer vacation from school, I convinced Bob to take me along.

This photo shows Mann ready to go on the front row with his #1 NGK Matchless, as Harley factory riders Dick Hammer (16), Roger Reiman (55), and Ralph White (15) chat among themselves. Hammer led the race for a time until his shift lever fell off and Mann took over and sped to victory. Not such a good day for Bob Emde. He crashed his Harley KR hard in the esses and earned a trip to the local hospital. Luckily, it was just a short visit and he was released and raced the Springfield Mile the following weekend. Great memories.

**Don Emde / Laguna Niguel, CA**

*We had no idea the Al Gunter fan club rolled so deep! The esteemed Mr. Emde was hardly the only reader to rise to Mr. Gunter's defense. In addition to a "famed Brit-bike tuner" and accomplished racer with seven AMA Grand National wins, Gunter also played a key role in the development of hydraulic disc brakes, the full-face helmet, and other motorcycle racing technology. On the subject of "Mann's Machine," that story contained other inaccuracies.*



### LETTER OF THE MONTH

#### WHEN MEN WERE MEN

I enjoyed the article about the venerable Yamaha DT-1 (*Roots: "A Perfect Storm," March, MC*) but it left out one use to which the bikes were put, what we now call "adventure motorcycles." What, the DT-1 as an ADV? It's an unlikely description based on what you see nowadays in that category, but "back in the day" they did the job. The '71 DT-1 I left Singapore with got me to the Netherlands eight months and 25,000 miles later. Reliable? No breakdowns other than rider-inflicted ones, and it ran on all the various sorts of gas put in the tank, including the greenish-tinged stuff in Afghanistan. Even with the boxes and gear strapped on, not to mention the fuel cylinders mounted on the fork, it handled fine and had no problems running from humid lowlands to the 13,000-foot Rohtang pass in India. The DT-1 was more than a dual-purpose bike—"multi-purpose" would better describe it.

**Al Latham / Chimacum, WA**

*You, sir, have thoroughly impressed us. That's quite a journey on any motorcycle, and it's doubly impressive that the DT-1, a machine most modern motorcyclists would consider too small, served you so well. We hope the AGV Sport Gallant gloves being sent to you from Motonation do the same. The leather Gallants (\$99) include a silicon-imprinted Almara palm and thumb areas for improved grip and armor on the knuckles. —Ed.*



#### THE PERFECT STORM

I have been an avid reader and motorcyclist for years. Last week I was reading your magazine and my heart skipped a beat. There was an article on the Yamaha DT-1 Enduro (*Roots: "A Perfect Storm," March, MC*). That was my first of many dirt bikes. I bought that bike in 1969 from the local dealer. It was his personal dirt bike and had been "thoroughly ridden," if you get my drift. It provided me with some of the most fun times of my life. On any Sunday I could be found blasting through the woods and trails. I shall keep this article into my later years to kickstart my juices when all I can do is reminisce. I am now pushing 72 and ride my second-generation Honda Magnas every chance I get.

**Ken Unger, a.k.a. Capt. Capsize / Merritt Island, FL**

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**PRAISE TO GO AROUND**

As an MC subscriber since 1988, April '15 stands out. Why? So many things. Joe Gresh mocking the Nintendo generation for not installing their own zip-ties. I have a 1974 Ducati 750SS as a daily rider; my Hawk GT had 22 years and 102,000 miles when I sold it to a friend. Loved the story on optimizing suspension you already have and a great bit of advice on the FZ-09 chain tension. Any article with a V-MAX in a comparison—it's the Shelby Cobra on two wheels. Plus, a seeming dedication to story-telling scenery, like the "road ends" FZ-09 and Rhinoceros Indian. Yeah, pull over and take a picture right...here! Then you had Ari Henning with Eddie and the ELR (*Roots*, April, MC). And a Manx. You've connected the dots of then and now.

**Glen Gagnier / Central Square, NY**

**RECALL NOTICE**

Quick note for Joe Gresh regarding "Total Recall" (*Cranked*, April, MC). I have a cure to suggest for you, Joe, that will help get your groove back. Buy something old, buy something British.

**R.W. Fetterman / via email**

Wow, Mr. Gresh was spot on with his article about kickstarting. I have told so many riders that it's a dying art. He was so funny and so right when he said all you need is a stiff thumb. Folks who ride now couldn't start three-quarters of the cycles I have, such as the 1966 Sears 124, a 1955 Cushman, and a 1963 Triumph 650.

**Bob Duffey / via email**

I just couldn't help but chuckle as I read Joe Gresh's "Total Recall" piece, all the while agreeing with so much of what he had to say on the subject of motorcyclists losing our mojo when it comes to our mechanical abilities. He's right: The unspoken contract was there; if we bought it they knew we would work on it and probably fix it too. Didn't matter what brand it was; they all had their own quirks. I totally agree with Joe when he says, "I'd rather push back to the dealer a motorcycle that's been comprehensively destroyed by my own hand than ride anywhere on a bike full of whirring unknowns."

**Andy Orofino / via email**

**GUSHING FOR GRESH**

Joe Gresh is the funniest writer I have ever read. Some of his stories are the best ever,

and I'm not just talking about motorcycle writing. He gets me rolling: "Kickstarted himself into a steaming puddle of exasperation" and, "believe it will start!"

**Brian W. Connors / via email**

Last fall, I sold my 850 Norton. Nothing but modern machines left in the shed. It just didn't feel right. Two weeks later, I found a '73 Bonneville in bits. Put it back together. Now when I open the shed door, it's no contest which bike gets the nod. The satisfaction of riding a machine that one can repair without a dealer's expensive assistance is priceless.

Modern-bike-riding friends question my sanity when I leave the key in the ignition when we park, but I know only one rider in 50 could figure my unique starting sequence. Oh, I do carry a few zip-ties instead of a shoelace, just to be modern.

**Ted Stanley / Whidbey Island, WA**

**CHANGE IS GOOD**

While technology is definitely improving today's motorcycles, we don't have to be left behind. It makes me smile when I download a new fuel map instead of having to remove and replace carburetors multiple times trying to get the jetting "just right." As a "rider of a certain age," I have seen, lived, and ridden many of the trends



in motorcycling over the last 30-some years. I had to laugh at the irony when I saw Yamaha's TDM 850 listed in your *Smart Money* (April, MC) section, having owned one in the late '90s. Great bike, certainly ahead of its time.

**James Hoyle / Carlsbad, CA**

**TWO VERSYS, NO WAITING**

I just finished reading your appraisal of the Versys 650 (*First Ride*, April, MC) and I have to agree. I still had a KLR650 (in Canada) when I bought my new 2008 Versys in September near Phoenix for riding during my winters down here. Its

"The unspoken contract was there; if we bought it they knew we would work on it and probably fix it too."

brilliance got to me, so I began watching ads for a used one for taking back up north. The '08 recession knocked the stuffing out of the motorcycle market in AZ. I bought a green '09 and sold the KLR soon after.

Right now my Arizona Versys has 56,000-plus miles on it as well as wearing knobbies, while my Kelowna, BC, Versys has 52,000 kms—32,400 miles wearing Metzeler Tourance rubber. It has been to Alaska once and more than likely will make the trip again this June.

When people ask what the Versys is, I ask if they remember the Triumph and BSA 650s of the 1960s. Then I tell them that Kawasaki is just making an updated version, only much better.

**"Fast Eddie" Copeman / Florence, AZ**

**SCOUTING STYLE**

I noticed that Brian Hatano says he ordered a windshield for his Scout (*Doin' Time*, April, MC) because he spends a great deal of time on the highway and he opted for a "short shield in hopes that it would provide sufficient wind deflection while not detracting from the Scout's lines." What got me was the picture showing a big sack (tank bag) heaped atop the beautifully sculpted tank... He's fussy about the windshield he chooses but then puts a tank bag on? As far as I'm concerned the lines of a cruiser run from the tip of the front fender to the tip of the rear fender and along the top edge, including the tank and seat.

Tank bag on a Scout? Really? I'd much rather see a solo bag on the swingarm, a small black luggage rack with a leather or leather-like rack bag, or mini saddlebags.

**Vincent LeVine / via email**

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# ME & MY BIKE

## 1916 Harley-Davidson Cut-Down

NAME  
Matt Walksler

AGE  
32

HOME  
Waynesville, North  
Carolina

OCCUPATION  
Early American  
Motorcycle Restorer



➔ Before choppers, you had bobbers; before bobbers, you had cut-downs. Teens-era bikes were tall, with a high center of gravity and a long wheelbase. The cut-down is exactly what it sounds like: The neck and axle clips are both raised, which drops the center of gravity. The seat post is dropped too, so instead of sitting on the bike, you're sitting in it. The tanks are shortened, and the wheelbase is shortened, all to make the bike lower, faster, lighter, and more agile.

I built this bike in 2009, from leftover parts too beat up to use on restorations. I'd never sacrifice a good survivor! It was important to me to stay in the period with this build—not only in terms of parts but in the way I built it too. I wasn't TIG welding. I wasn't using super-light materials. It was really an attempt to do exactly what they would have done back in the mid-'20s.

I ride it everywhere; it's my cruise-around-town vehicle. I live in a small, one-road town, so legality isn't really an issue. I'm thinking about running it in the 2016 Motorcycle Cannonball. I know the chassis is good and solid, and the motor is up to par. It's comfortable, it's low, it's light, and it gets down the road at 60 mph with relative ease.

I've known the organizer of Milwaukee's Mama Tried motorcycle show for a long time. He invited me to bring a bike this year, and when I saw the photos of guys ice racing after last year's show, I knew I had to try it on the cut-down. I bought some screws, watched a YouTube video, and built some tires. That's not as easy as it looks! The last few laps it was getting pretty loose—half the screws were missing from the front tire. I'll be back on the same bike next year, with better tires!

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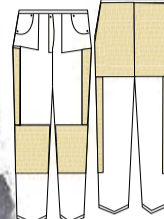
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# 2015 DUCATI MULTISTRADA 1200 DVT

Variable Valve Timing  
Tames Ducati's Beast

**THEY SAY**  
“Four bikes in one.  
(Still!)”

**WE SAY**  
“Call it three, but  
street smarts make  
up for any dirt  
deficiency.”



## EVOLUTION

Continuously variable valve timing gives the old Testastretta V-twin a new lease on life.

## RIVALS

Aprilia Caponord, BMW R1200GS, KTM 1290 Super Adventure, Moto Guzzi Stelvio, Yamaha Super Ténéré



The Ducati Multistrada's greatest asset—its superbike soul—has also been its Achilles' heel. As much as the Multi excelled at high-speed, high-mileage travel, it was often out of its element during casual riding. The last-generation Multistrada simply didn't like to go slow. Even in retuned-for-road-riding form, the race-bred Testastretta V-twin engine could be stubborn and surly at low revs, responding to small throttle openings with shuddering acceleration totally out of character for such a luxury-touring bike.

Not anymore. The Testastretta V-twin has been totally redesigned with Desmodromic Variable Timing (DVT, see *Hard Parts* sidebar), which continuously varies both intake and exhaust cam timing based on throttle position, engine speed, and other factors to improve combustion efficiency, engine smoothness, and power across the rev range. The results are dramatic.

Ducati claims 7 percent more horsepower and 9 percent more torque, with those gains spread over a wider rev range. Translation: 160 hp at 9,500 rpm and 100.3 pound-feet torque at 7,500 rpm, with at least 60 pound-feet above 3,500 rpm and 75 pound-feet everywhere over 5,750 rpm. The thrilling top-end rush remains and is stronger than ever, and now acceleration is even more urgent at low revs too. More importantly, with a claimed 78-percent reduction in “engine shuddering” at less than 40-percent throttle, this new version is just as happy putting around town, chugging through unexpectedly tight hairpins, or passing without downshifting—all scenarios that could give the previous Multistrada fits.

Of course, DVT isn't the only big news for the third-generation Multistrada. The addition of a 5D Inertial Measurement Unit (IMU) capable of dynamically measuring pitch, roll, and yaw greatly extends the

precision and sensitivity of the ABS, traction control (DTC), and Skyhook EVO semi-active electronic suspension (on the \$19,695 S model—a \$2,000 premium over the base bike). The new IMU also enables wheelie control (DWC)—a not-frivolous addition on this motorcycle—as well as a clever new cornering light (also exclusive to the S model), a separate LED that illuminates above 20 mph and at more than 7 degrees lean angle to light up the inside of corners. A night ride revealed the conventional halogen headlight on the base model (like the old bike) remains average at best, but the S model's LED array is a face melter, and the cornering light adds a degree of confidence and safety after dark.

The upper fairing is now 1.6 inches wider, and the five-position, manually adjustable windscreen, although narrow, adequately shields the torso and smoothly routes air over an average-size rider's shoulders with minimal turbulence. The



**A new exhaust silencer, airbox, and all-new engine covers considerably decrease mechanical noise so the DVT engine sounds better too—no treble, all bass.**



**The S model is upgraded with a full-color, easy-to-read TFT display. All relevant data, including gear position, speed, rpm, and various rider-aid settings, is displayed.**



**New multi-function switches control the ride modes, suspension settings, and the cruise control. Best of all, they're lighted!**



**Superbike power demands four-piston Brembo monoblock superbike brakes (upgraded to the M50s on the S). Bosch "Cornering" ABS keeps you out of trouble.**

improved saddle has been redesigned to make more space for the rider and passenger both, and the seat is now adjustable 20mm up and down (but this change requires tools). The riding position is perfectly upright and all-day comfortable, with slightly higher, more rearset footrests than BMW's GS for a sportier feel. Electronic cruise control is now standard on both the base and S models as well.

The base model's Marzocchi suspension is impressive—firm, crisply damped, and essentially flawless on the unnaturally smooth curves of Lanzarote in the Canary Islands, where the press launch took place. Still, the EVO rendition of the Skyhook system, benefitting from additional electronic intelligence as well as even lower-friction Sachs components and higher-resolution software, is a real revelation. Even aiming for speed bumps and the occasional construction-zone damage couldn't upset the chassis, which remained not only composed but also comfortable over irregularities that would have jostled the base model or any lesser bike.

There are four ride modes like before—Sport, Touring, Urban, and Enduro—each with power delivery, ABS/DTC/DWC profiles, and, in the case of the Skyhook-equipped S model, suspension calibrations to suit the intended usage, and each for the most part delivers performance exactly meeting to our expectations. For all-around riding we preferred the Touring mode that delivers the full-rated

160 ponies in a "smooth" manner (Urban and Enduro both slash output to 100 bhp). Although valve timing is altered frequently, you never feel any difference from the saddle—there are no steps, jumps, or other indications that the timing is changing—only highlighting the addictive linearity with which this bike builds power.

Sport mode delivers "sharper" throttle response, but this almost contradicts the gentlemanly character of this Multistrada. Our only real complaint about any of the ride modes regarded baseline traction control calibration in Sport mode. The default setting is level 4 (of 8), and on more than one occasion, specifically when lean angle increased quickly in sharp hairpin turns, the usually infallible

**An optional tour pack (\$1,399) adds a centerstand, three-level heated grips, and 58 liters' worth of hard luggage capacity—though the bags' plastic hinges are floppy.**



DTC cut power too severely, causing the bike to fall into the corner. Fortunately, all the rider-aid settings can be trimmed manually (and saved).

The Multistrada has always been a fun, fast touring bike. Now it's even faster than before, but, more importantly, it's even easier to ride slowly too. That might sound like strange praise, but as anyone who has ridden the previous-generation Multistrada will tell you, that's the best possible compliment we can give. If you want superbike-level performance in a more humane shape, you can't do better than Ducati's latest Multi-bike.

## TECH SPEC

PRICE	\$19,695 (S model)
ENGINE	1198cc, liquid-cooled 90° V-twin
TRANS/FINAL DRIVE	6-speed/chain
CLAIMED POWER	160.0 hp @ 9500 rpm
CLAIMED TORQUE	100.3 lb.-ft. @ 7500 rpm
FRAME	Tubular-steel trellis
FRONT SUSPENSION	Sachs 48mm fork adjustable for spring preload with dynamic compression and rebound damping; 6.7-in. travel
REAR SUSPENSION	Sachs shock adjustable for spring preload with dynamic compression and rebound damping; 6.7-in. travel
FRONT BRAKE	Brembo four-piston calipers, 320mm discs with ABS
REAR BRAKE	Brembo two-piston caliper, 265mm disc with ABS
RAKE/TRAIL	24.0°/4.3 in.
SEAT HEIGHT	32.5/33.3 in.
WHEELBASE	60.2 in.
FUEL CAPACITY	5.3 gal.
CLAIMED WEIGHT	511 lb. wet
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## VERDICT

**A Multistrada that's just as happy going slow as it is going fast—which is a huge compliment!**

## HARD PARTS



## DESMODROMIC VARIABLE TIMING EXPLAINED

Valve overlap—that crucial interval when both the intake and exhaust valves are open, expressed in degrees of crankshaft rotation—is typically a fixed parameter and always a compromise. For example, the final version of Ducati's Testastretta EVO 1198 superbike engine specified 41 degrees of valve overlap, optimal for high-rpm power. The Testastretta 11° engine, designed for the previous Multistrada and still used in the Diavel and Monster 1200, reduced valve overlap to 11 degrees, sacrificing top-end power for a low- and midrange boost.

Ducati's Desmodromic Variable Timing (DVT) effectively does away with this compromise by continuously varying valve overlap from negative 37 degrees to a maximum of 53 degrees. What does that mean? At minimum valve overlap, the exhaust valve closes to 1mm of lift 37 degrees before the opening intake valve reaches 1mm of lift. So for 37 degrees of



crank rotation both valves are at or below 1mm of lift—giving no overlap. Maximum overlap, the other extreme, retards exhaust timing and advances intake timing so that both valves are at or above 1mm of lift for a whopping 53 degrees of crank angle. In this one engine, you have valve timing that's both much "tamer" than the Testastretta 11° and much "hotter" than the old 1198. Unlike some systems that move cam timing based on engine speed, Ducati's continuously adjusts both sets of cams depending on load and other factors.

The mechanics of the DVT system are actually quite simple. A hydraulic cam-phase adjuster (pictured above) sits at the end of each intake and exhaust cam, with its external housing connected to the timing belt and the internal housing rigidly fixed to the

camshaft. Separating these two housings is an actuator that can rotate to advance or delay the cam timing via using engine oil metered by ECU-powered control valves.

A new, higher-volume oil pump delivers the added hydraulic pressure required by the DVT system and new knock sensors—one on



each head—further inform the ECU's myriad calculations so that changes in valve or ignition timing won't induce detonation.

Otherwise the basic Testastretta V-twin remains essentially unchanged. Ducati's traditional desmodromic valve actuation remains intact. In fact, the desmo system is uniquely suited to DVT, engine designer Marco Sairu says, because it requires less cam torque to open the valves, allowing the DVT adjusters to be smaller for a more compact overall system. And if you're worried about added complexity increasing maintenance, don't; the valve check interval of this engine is extended to 18,600 miles.





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# 2015 YAMAHA YZF-R3

An Entry-Level Sportbike  
From Yamaha. Finally!

**THEY SAY**  
“Easy for  
beginners, fun for  
veterans.”

**WE SAY**  
“When can we  
have ours?”



The rage continues. Small-displacement sportbikes have been a growing trend, and now Yamaha has joined the fray with this new YZF-R3. That means all of the Big Four Japanese manufacturers, plus KTM (and the ever-present Hyosung), now offer sporty, entry-level options. It's a brave, affordable new world.

Powering the R3 is a 321cc parallel twin with a “standard,” 180-degree crankshaft—no funky crankpin offsets or oddball firing order like the FZ-07 or YZF-R1. Yamaha has not released a claim for horsepower but suggested confidence when claiming “most in class.” (That probably doesn't include KTM's RC390.) We'll put one on the dyno as soon as we can, but expect slightly more grunt than Kawasaki's 296cc Ninja 300—probably around 25cc worth, in fact.

The seat is low, at 30.7 inches (the same height as Honda's CBR300R, and 0.2 inch lower than the Ninja 300), and is quite flat front to back and narrow at the nose. At 368 pounds with gas (claimed), the R3 is about 10 pounds lighter than the Ninja 300. It's also 10 pounds heavier than a CBR300, but never mind that; this is a seriously approachable machine. All but the most diminutive riders will be feeling confident at stoplights.

Well-calibrated fuel injection and a short first gear mean leaving stoplights is easy too. We idled around a parking lot in first gear with the speedo showing 4 mph. The gearbox uses fairly close ratios, which adds up to sixth gear being usable for anything over 40 to 45 mph. Motorcyclists with confident clutch feel and highway miles in their future will probably want to gear the R3 up a little, but even with stock

ratios the motor is smooth and unstressed up to freeway speeds.

Brakes are single discs front and rear, status quo for the class. Initial bite from the two-piston Akebono caliper up front is a little soft, but with a little extra squeeze there's plenty of power to slow down. Carefully, though, as there is no ABS. Without having compared directly, the R3's brakes remind us of the Ninja 300's; good, but not as good as the Honda CBR300's, which combine solid feel with much more assertive bite.

Suspension, too, is definitely in the ballpark with its Japanese competitors. The fork is a 41mm KYB unit (4mm larger than the Honda or Kawasaki's but 2mm smaller than the KTM's) and shares good compliance with the KYB shock holding up the rear. The shock is adjustable for seven levels of preload, and at 185 pounds

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**R3 three ways: the blacked-out Raven scheme is subtle, but we think the R3 looks especially sharp in red and white.**



## EVOLUTION

The globally marketed R25 is bored out to 321cc and brought to America as an all-new contender in the lightweight sportbike class.

## RIVALS

Honda CBR300R, Kawasaki Ninja 300, KTM RC390

this editor was glad to be able to dial in more spring. The suspension is definitely on the soft side but soaked up bumps all morning during our 120-mile street ride while feeling perfectly stable. All in all, completely satisfactory for the class.

As we've seen with Yamaha's other bargain bikes (think FZ series), low cost doesn't mean all of the niceties are left out. The R3 is outfitted generously, with an LED taillight, properly knurled footpegs, and crisp paint that looks as good up close as it does rolling past. Especially well appointed is the dash unit, which uses the correct combination of analog tachometer and digital speedo, as well as including a fuel gauge, shift light, and instant/average fuel economy figures. Picking nits for a moment, we always think it's annoying when a bike has a fuel gauge and offers mileage figures but doesn't calculate range—come on, all of the data is there!

The R3 is an all-new bike for the US market but shares most of its parts with the R25, a 250cc sportbike that Yamaha has been selling in the global market for a few years. As a result, the fit and finish of the R3 is above the status quo for a first-generation model. It's built in Indonesia but has none of the quirks or rattles a skeptical consumer might expect. In fact, the first thing you will notice about the R3 is the attention to style—we think the nicely shaped cast swingarm is a great touch. The bike fits together well and has definite parking-lot presence.

Which leads us to the best news of all: price. Just as the suspension,

**Clockwise from right: A 298mm disc up front does the trick, but more aggressive pads would help the brakes; note the shift light at the top of the dash; an LED taillight slims the R3's caboose, but floppy blinkers (identical to the FZ series) don't flatter.**



brakes, and seat height all fit in line with the competition, so too does the \$4,990 base price. That's nine bucks cheaper than a similarly equipped Ninja 300 and around \$600 more than a CBR300 (\$4,399 without ABS). Both the Ninja and CBR have ABS as an option, which we have long stood by as an excellent feature in a motorcycle designed for less experienced riders, but the R3 is still a worthy competitor.

More to the point, all of motorcycling should rejoice that Yamaha has joined this area of the market with such a capable, stylish, and fun motorcycle. While we can't wait for our comparison test with all of the other bikes in the category (think Honda, Kawasaki, and KTM), you can tell your friends that Yamaha's new R3 is here, and it's good.



## VERDICT

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Everything a lightweight sportbike should be, for the right price. It's just lacking ABS.**

## TECH SPEC

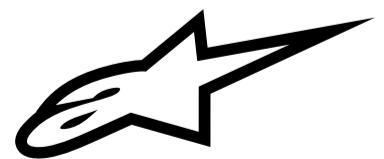
PRICE	\$4990
ENGINE	321cc, liquid-cooled parallel-twin
TRANS/FINAL DRIVE	6-speed/chain
CLAIMED POWER	N/A
CLAIMED TORQUE	N/A
FRAME	Tubular-steel twin-spar
FRONT SUSPENSION	KYB 41mm; 5.1-in. travel
REAR SUSPENSION	KYB shock adjustable for spring preload; 4.9-in. travel
FRONT BRAKE	Akebono two-piston caliper, 298mm disc
REAR BRAKE	Akebono one-piston caliper, 220mm disc
RAKE/TRAIL	25.0°/3.7 in.
SEAT HEIGHT	30.7 in.
WHEELBASE	54.3 in.
FUEL CAPACITY	3.7 gal.
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HARLEY-DAVIDSON STREET 750 VS. HONDA CTX700N VS. KAWASAKI VULCAN S VS. STAR BOLT VS. SUZUKI M50 VS. TRIUMPH AMERICA

# RE-ENTRY POINTS

Big Fun on Small Cruisers

WORDS: Andy Cherney / PHOTOS: Kevin Wing





Small-displacement cruisers sometimes get the short end of the stick. They're too often labeled as beginner motorcycles, which can be a fate worse than death in the size-conscious cruiser market. When they hear you're on the hunt for a smaller-proportioned, lightweight machine, well-meaning friends will often steer you toward the "entry-level" end of the spectrum, where the bikes are built to a strict price, and, well, they often show it. At that zip code, your options used to involve just air-cooled, single-cylinder, carbureted engines, chain drive, a five-speed gearbox, and drum brakes.

But what if you have some riding experience and a hankering for more than just a cheap quarter-liter machine that can barely outrun its own shadow? Maybe you want something that actually looks, feels, and works like a substantial motorcycle rather than a child's toy but want to pay less than \$9,000. Fortunately, your midsize cruiser choices these days are way more plentiful and a lot more diverse.

Although they all have twin-cylinder motors, our group of unusual suspects runs the stylistic gamut, from retro classics like the Triumph America to the more bobber-ish Star Bolt. You want diversity? We've got genre-bending crossover machines like Honda's funky CTX 700N and Kawasaki's new, über-versatile Vulcan S, both of which offer a slightly more sporting bias. Also remaking the landscape is Harley's liquid-cooled Street 750, which marks The Motor Company's latest purpose-built, entry-level model. Meanwhile, Suzuki's long-running Boulevard M50 represents another side of the cruiser continuum: the musclebike aesthetic.

A more disparate group of rigs would be hard to imagine, and that's a credit to the various manufacturers who came up with such different options for a small-displacement cruiser. Our emphasis in testing focused less on pure performance than accessibility and value. In the end, we were surprised with the rankings at the top and the bottom. Grab a seat, turn the page, and dig in.



## 6TH PLACE

### HARLEY-DAVIDSON STREET 750



» With its subtle, blacked-out look, the Harley Street 750's overall styling conjures up thoughts of a miniature Dyna crossed with a small Sportster, but a baby V-Rod is probably the most accurate familial reference for the new Street 750. The Street's Revolution X engine gets liquid-cooling and four valves per cylinder in a 60-degree configuration like the V-Rod's Revolution mill, but that's where the similarities end.

For one, the Street is the lightest vehicle currently produced by The Motor Company, 507 pounds on our scales (the Street 500 weighs the same). Narrow handlebars, a 25.7-inch saddle height, and mid-mount controls position you atop the bike, and average or taller pilots will get an excellent view of their kneecaps protruding above the fuel tank. Only small

riders will feel totally at home—and our smaller testers did—but then they're the target demographic.

Beginning riders will appreciate the Street's easy-shifting transmission and light clutch pull, things you could never really count on with a Sportster. The Street's powerband won't blow your socks off, but it's not supposed to; a polite rush of torque comes at 1,500 rpm, surges at 2,100 rpm, and then takes a dip before climbing to the 43.3 pound-feet peak at 3,500 rpm. Power peaks way up at 7,800 rpm, just



**The Street's engine is the best part, peppy and up to the entry-level task. Oddly it never reminded us of a Harley, which is a shame.**

trailing the Triumph's best-in-show 55.9 hp. Those are good numbers, but the Street never feels particularly punchy.

New riders will find cornering clearance decent, though we found the suspension wanting—very soft up front, stiff out back—and then you have the brakes. Two-piston calipers acting on single discs (front and rear) offer little power, with virtually non-existent feel and weak initial bite. The lever comes back to the bar, and you're left wondering just how much brake you have left. We get that Harley wants newbies to go easy on the brakes to prevent locking a wheel (when ABS is not even an option), but these are flat-out crummy brakes. Try again, Milwaukee.

Performance transgressions on a price-point bike we can understand, but in the Street you also have standard build quality to go with it. You can't miss the sloppy welds, exposed wiring, and mismatched hardware. To be fair, designing a beginner bike from scratch is no easy assignment. At \$7,499, the Street is among the least expensive of these six. Unfortunately, it both looks and feels like it.

# 5TH PLACE

## SUZUKI BOULEVARD M50



» With meaty slash-cut mufflers, beefy cast-aluminum wheels, and a low-rise bar capped with a swoopy headlight cowl, the Boulevard M50's musclebike demeanor instantly separates it from this class of incompatibles. The corpulent, Arlen Ness-inspired styling might not be everybody's cup of tea, but the wide M50 still looks good on the street.

The M50's rider triangle stretches you out into a classic clamshell stance, with footpegs more forward than normal, which not every rider will appreciate. The 27.6-inch-tall seat gives newbies a flat-footed stance, but this is a heavy bike (at 593 pounds fully fueled, it's the second flabbiest), and just getting it off the sides-tand isn't easy.

Even though the M50's fuel injection is crisp, you have to rev the engine out quite

a bit to achieve reasonable acceleration. Although it's 135cc larger than the Honda's parallel twin, the Boulevard's V-twin only has a little more torque and actually a little less horsepower—like fractions, more or less. And this meager output lugging around nearly 600 pounds of bike makes for a machine that never feels particularly light on its feet. Newbies might not mind and will also appreciate the M50's five-speed transmission and its smooth transitions



**Break out the polish! The M50's engine (as well as the rest of the bike) is cloaked in chrome and flashy paint. We like the engine's character, but the bike feels lethargic due to its road-hugging weight.**

between gears, along with little jacking from the no-maintenance shaft final drive.

The other good news is that the M50 is well balanced, and ride quality is fairly good. The Suzuki carries much of its weight low within its 65.2-inch wheelbase, so the bike transitions decently, with low-slung bars that provide solid leverage. In fast sweepers, it gives pilots a nice stable feel, solid tracking, and decent ground clearance, and the M50 can be ridden aggressively if you're willing to add muscle; the longest wheelbase in the group and a fat 130/90 front tire offer some resistance. But be aware of riding too aggressively since the brakes aren't quite modern, especially the numb rear drum. (A drum!)

Instrumentation is fairly Spartan, with a solo gauge integrated into the cowl, and the Boulevard's finish also reveals the usual metric cruiser crimes: cheap-looking plastic and subpar detailing in the fenders, cowl, and cylinder fins. The fifth-place finish comes by way of those faults plus excessive weight and an \$8,599 MSRP, the highest here.





## 4TH PLACE

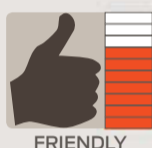
HONDA CTX700N



CURB APPEAL



VALUE



FRIENDLY

» Honda says CTX stands for “Comfort Technology and Experience,” which we’ll accept because it’s obvious the “C” does not stand for “Cruiser.” At least not in the traditional sense. The boys at Big Red argue that the CTX integrates the best parts of “the cruiser idiom with its laid-back seating, forward-set pegs, and a torque-rich mill,” but riders asked to actually gaze upon the CTX could be excused for thinking it doesn’t belong in this group. Once you’ve gone around a couple of turns astride Honda’s crossover machine,

however, all (okay, most) is forgiven.

Why? It’s a pretty good *motorcycle*. Credit, in part, the CTX’s responsive steering and neutral handling. It’s not quite as agile as the Vulcan S, but there’s more than decent ground clearance and well-damped suspension. Stable tracking, effortless transitions, and impressively strong brakes with a firm bite and good feel make this machine a lot of fun to ride.

We opted for the CTX700N base model with conventional six-speed manual transmission rather than the DCT/ABS trim, which includes the Automatic Dual Clutch tranny and ABS for \$600 more. (ABS is only available with the DCT as a package.) The manual tranny is easy to use, and its short throws, positive engagement, and light lever operation made it a favorite here. The CTX was

also surprisingly comfortable, with an open seating position, nicely padded saddle (with ample passenger room), and reasonable ergos, though the forward-set foot controls might annoy some. The bike is smooth and deceptively quick, with an engine that delivers good low-end torque from 1,500 rpm to its peak of 41.7 pound-feet, which arrives only at 4,100 rpm, before gradually tailing off. Peak power is 43.9 hp at 6,000 rpm, 400 rpm shy of the redline. This is a sedate, fuel-efficient (61 mpg average) engine that makes a ton more sense in this relaxed “cruiser” than it does in the sportier NC700X. Character? Some, yes, but not enough to sway votes.

And that’s a lot of why the Honda isn’t higher up the finishing order. It’s a terrific machine with unconventional, hard-to-categorize styling. Not quite a standard, not quite a cruiser...something else. But here’s the thing: It’s our jaded view. New riders might have no clue that a cruiser is supposed to look a certain way or that a bike resembling a so-called standard can have a cruiser-like riding position. If you like the Honda’s appearance, we say go for it. It is the least expensive bike in the test, equaling the non-ABS version of the Vulcan S—a lot of “cruiser” for the money.



## 3RD PLACE

TRIUMPH AMERICA



CURB APPEAL



VALUE



FRIENDLY

» Even with a parallel-twin engine, the America tacks closest to the classic cruiser styling ideal. Yep, the Brits channeled all the usual cruiser tropes here, beginning with full fenders and a deeply dished saddle, plus a super-wide handlebar and the only floorboards here. Unfortunately the America’s classic styling is undermined by some wonky finishes with questionable design choices, like a barrel-shaped, chromed solo



instrument gauge that looks clamped between the risers as an afterthought and the oddly shaped console that hides indicator lights.

But never mind all that. Settle into the plush saddle, grab the wheelbarrow handlebar, and get ready. The Triumph delivers far more performance and fun than you'd expect from the somewhat dowdy packaging. A quick trip to the spec sheet reveals some of the reasons. While the Triumph's engine has the second largest displacement here, it produces the most horsepower. It also posts the second best torque numbers, just 5 pound-feet less than the grunty, slightly larger Bolt. Flexibility is superb. If not for the America's hefty wet weight (at 600 pounds, the chubbiest here), we have no doubt it'd smoke its true competitors in the class. The only thing missing is thump and throb in the America's overly polite powerplant; some aftermarket pipes could give it a voice as well.

The America also throws its weight around more effectively than you'd expect from the casual geometry, with the super-wide handlebar giving pilots plenty of leverage when angling into turns. Handling is slow, with heavy initial turn-in on the fat front tire, but the Triumph is smooth and stable. A 63.4-inch wheelbase also means battleship-like stability, and the America brings brakes that are nearly on par with the best here, with stellar initial bite, good progressive feel, and plenty of power from two-pot calipers on both front and rear discs (which Harley runs as well). Too bad cornering clearance is limited by the floorboards.

If it weren't so big and heavy, and didn't look quite so stuck in the past, America might have taken the whole enchilada. Make no mistake: You won't forget that it's a middleweight cruiser, but with this Triumph, you also won't have to settle for lackluster performance. For what it is, the America works very well indeed.



**As with all Triumphs, the America comes equipped with braided stainless brake lines for improved feel and feedback.**



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## 2ND PLACE

### KAWASAKI VULCAN S



CURB APPEAL



VALUE



FRIENDLY

» Even with feet-forward pegs, a pullback bar, and a low-slung saddle, you might not think of the Vulcan S as a cruiser. It's light and perky, with a 649cc parallel twin, not some loping, big(ish)-inch V-twin. Perhaps "S" is for "Sporting"? Team Green is probably fine with all this vagueness, since market research has determined that riders are mostly concerned with finding a motorcycle that physically fits them.

Cue the Vulcan S and its Ergo-Fit concept; it allows prospective buyers to mix and match dealer-installed seat and handlebar options that work with intrinsically adjustable footpegs to suit their

dimensions. Our Vulcan S's upright, open riding position (the standard layout) feels sort of cruiser-like, though maybe it's just the teardrop-shaped tank and relatively small fenders that gave us that impression.

But the littlest Vulcan doesn't have much else in common with its bigger V-twin brothers, starting with its powerplant; that's derived from a—*gasp*—Ninja 650. The liquid-cooled, fuel-injected 649cc parallel twin gets revised cam profiles and a modified intake, exhaust, and ECU for its Vulcan application. So how does the second-lightest bike make use of the smallest engine here? Very effectively. Great roll-on power helps the engine feel bigger than it is, and the Vulcan S's torque is spread around judiciously. Power delivery is linear even though it doesn't make its 54-hp peak until 7,200 rpm. Compared to the other engines here, the Vulcan's seems to rev forever.

Everything about the Vulcan S feels light, from the easy-shifting six-speed gearbox to the steering. A 62-inch wheelbase is about mid-pack in this group, but the Kawasaki is still the sportiest here; you can actually flick it into a turn with little resistance. The ride can be firm on the single shock's 3.2 inches of travel, while the well-damped 41mm fork serves up a more controlled experience. The feel is similar to the Honda's, and most testers were split between the CTX and Vulcan for most dialed-in suspension.

The Vulcan S is totally welcoming yet still tons of fun. The variable ergonomic package is, if not completely new, very well executed here. Dynamically, we like the motorcycle a lot. The only open question is whether cruiser-intended buyers will see it as a true cruiser. We encourage them to look beyond the non-traditional styling before making up their minds.



Where other bikes in this test get by with the basics, the Vulcan has a full-featured dash with a tach that swings all the way to 9,500 rpm. A fuel gauge is always handy too.

# 1ST PLACE

## STAR BOLT R-SPEC



CURB APPEAL



VALUE



FRIENDLY

» Sometimes these comparisons are close, real squeakers. We fight and wrangle and play Underwood-esque politics to affect the outcome. Not this time. Simply put: The Star Bolt crushed it. One and done. See you, chumps.

How? A less-is-more design with exposed mechanical components and minimal ornamentation make the Bolt a sort of steampunk standout in this sea of chrome and plastic. With its cropped fenders, small tank, solo seat, and uncluttered bars, the Bolt fits the restrained aesthetic that's in vogue right now.

It's not just styling either. We've been fans of Star's 942cc air-cooled engine since its debut in the V-Star 950 back in 2009, though here the rigid-mounted 60-degree V-twin gets changes to its airbox, exhaust, and fuel mapping to deliver better low- and midrange punch. Torque, which starts strong, crossing 50 pound-feet before 2,000 rpm, peaks at a best-in-test 55.3 pound-feet at 2,800 rpm. The Bolt's single-pin crank adds the sought-after auditory exclamation, and it doesn't feel detuned like many metric cruisers do. Summing up, the Bolt's engine has texture, grunt, and poise. It's not the smoothest at freeway speeds, but that is its only real shortcoming.

The Bolt offers enviable Goldilocks ergos for the average-size motorcyclist. The handlebars atop a tallish neck require a slight reach, and mid-mount footpegs allow mostly adequate legroom, but that



position, combined with the low, 27.2-inch seat height and sloped 3.2-gallon fuel tank simply add to the bad-boy demeanor. Go ahead; channel your inner scofflaw.

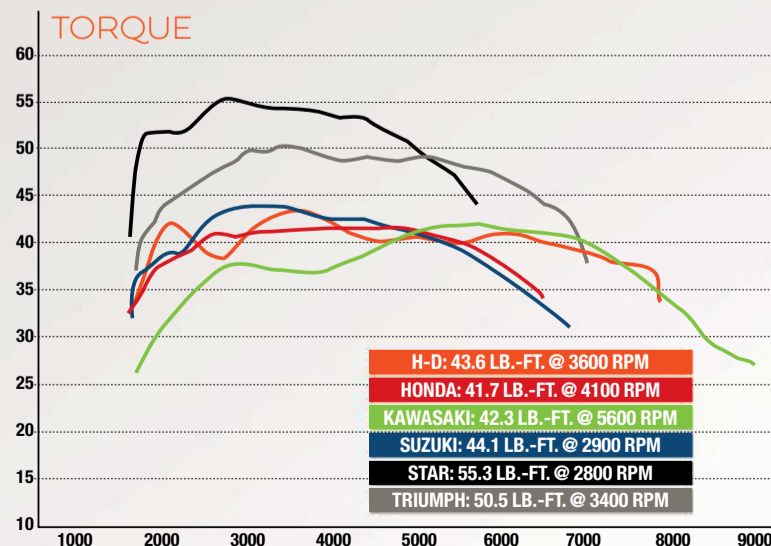
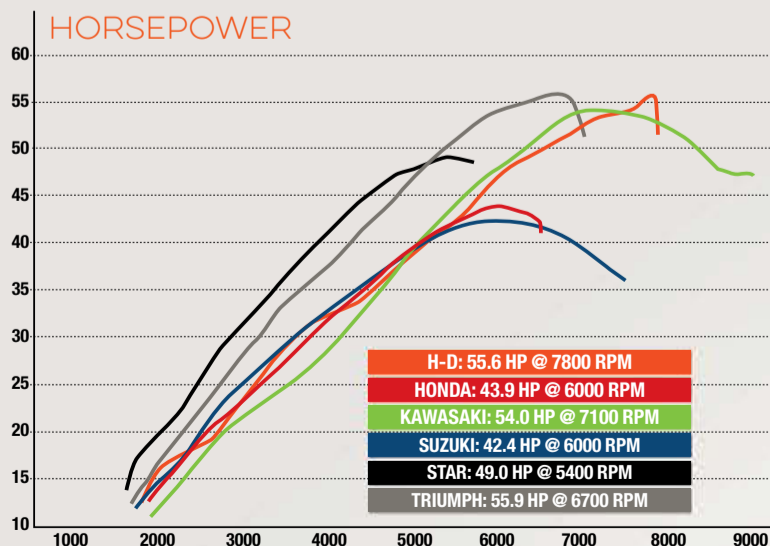
You get a full 4.7 inches of fairly well-dialed-in bounce up front, but we had the twin rear shocks hit the end of their 2.8-inch travel on some larger potholes—and that's with the R-Spec bike, whose \$300 upcharge includes reservoir shocks. The chassis is fine, though the steering is slower than some in this test, and it has far too little cornering clearance; you'll drag the pegs often.

It's true—the Bolt isn't functionally the best bike here, but it manages the cruiser/performance compromises extremely well. It's the rare machine that is fun for experienced riders and kind to newbies. It follows traditional cruiser styling cues

while still managing to be its own entity. And the build quality, despite a few minor miscues, embodies that elusive cruiser aesthetic without sacrificing for price. Good looking. Fun to ride. Affordable. A winner in our opinion.

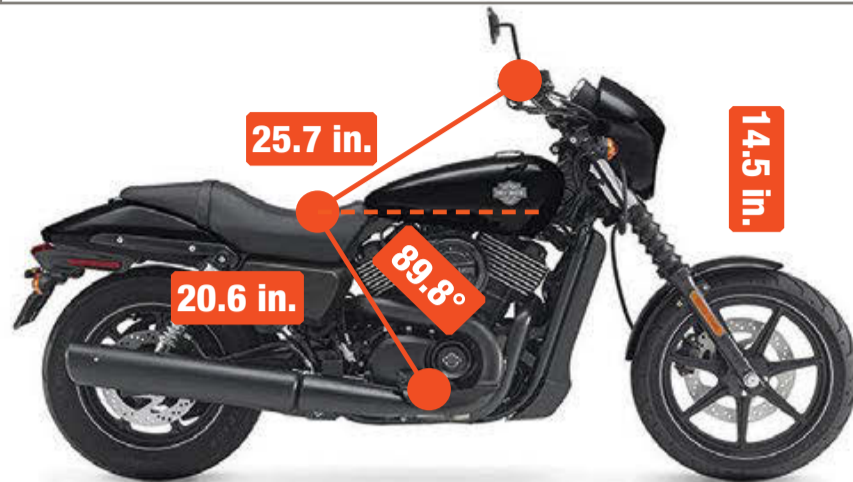


**The biggest engine here was also the most popular, mainly due to its excellent character but also its great spread of thrust. The exhaust note is suitably lumpy.**



**As expected: The largest engine (the Bolt's) makes the most torque but has the lowest rev ceiling. Not as expected: The smallest engine (the Vulcan's) makes above-midpack horsepower and good torque. The Harley's 55.6 hp happens just before the rev limiter kicks in. Honda trades hp for mpg.**

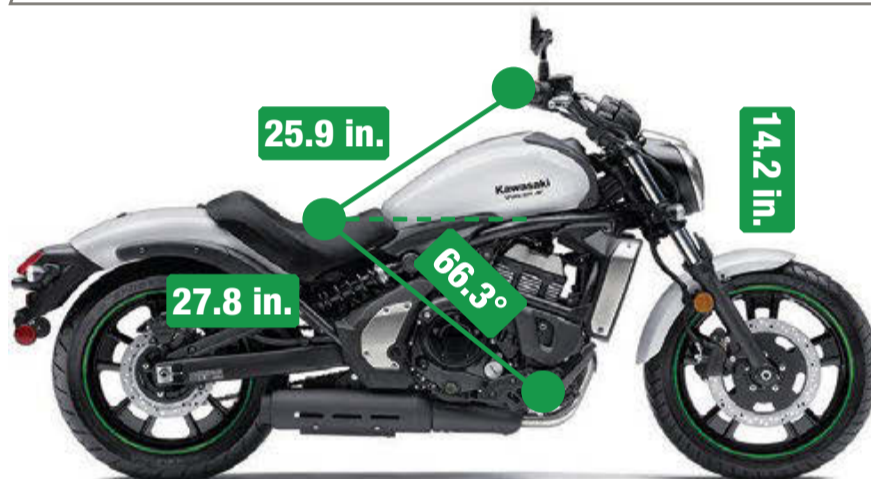
## HARLEY-DAVIDSON STREET 750



## HONDA CTX700N



## KAWASAKI VULCAN S ABS

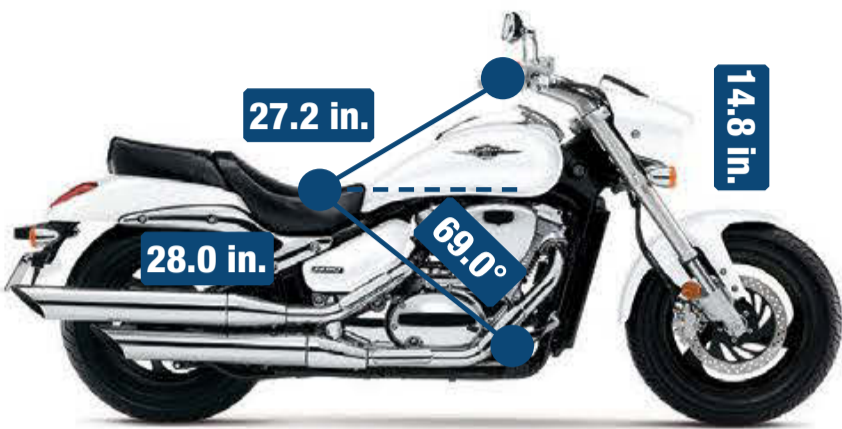


## STAR BOLT R-SPEC



TECH SPEC	HARLEY-DAVIDSON STREET 750	HONDA CTX700N	KAWASAKI VULCAN S ABS	STAR BOLT R-SPEC
PRICE	\$7499	\$6999	\$7399	\$8390
ENGINE	754cc, liquid-cooled 60° V-twin	670cc, liquid-cooled parallel-twin	649cc, liquid-cooled parallel-twin	942cc, air-cooled 60° V-twin
TRANS/FINAL DRIVE	6-speed/belt	6-speed/chain	6-speed/chain	5-speed/belt
MEASURED POWER	55.6 hp @ 7800 rpm	43.9 hp @ 6000 rpm	54.0 hp @ 7100 rpm	49.0 hp @ 5400 rpm
MEASURED TORQUE	43.6 lb.-ft. @ 3600 rpm	41.7 lb.-ft. @ 4100 rpm	42.3 lb.-ft. @ 5600 rpm	55.3 lb.-ft. @ 2800 rpm
FRAME	Tubular-steel double-cradle	Tubular-steel semi-double-cradle	Tubular-steel perimeter	Tubular-steel double-cradle
FRONT SUSPENSION	Harley-Davidson 37mm fork; 5.5-in. travel	Showa 41mm fork; 4.2-in. travel	KYB 41mm fork; 5.1-in. travel	KYB 41mm fork; 4.7-in. travel
REAR SUSPENSION	Harley-Davidson shocks adjustable for spring preload; 3.5-in. travel	Showa shock adjustable for spring preload; 4.3-in. travel	KYB shock adjustable for spring preload; 3.2-in. travel	KYB shocks adjustable for spring preload; 2.8-in. travel
FRONT BRAKE	Harley-Davidson two-piston caliper, 292mm disc	Nissin two-piston caliper, 320mm disc	Nissin two-piston caliper, 300mm disc with ABS	Akebono two-piston caliper, 298mm disc
REAR BRAKE	Harley-Davidson two-piston caliper, 260mm disc	Nissin one-piston caliper, 240mm disc	Nissin one-piston caliper, 250mm disc with ABS	Akebono one-piston caliper, 298mm disc
RAKE/TRAIL	32.0°/4.5 in.	27.7°/4.4 in.	31.0°/4.7 in.	29.0°/5.1 in.
SEAT HEIGHT	27.9 in.	28.3 in.	27.8 in.	27.2 in.
WHEELBASE	60.4 in.	60.2 in.	62.0 in.	61.8 in.
MEASURED WEIGHT	507/486 (tank full/empty)	482/463 lb. (tank full/empty)	499/477 lb. (tank full/empty)	549/530 lb. (tank full/empty)
FUEL CAPACITY	3.5 gal.	3.2 gal.	3.7 gal.	3.2 gal.
FUEL ECONOMY	56/41/49 mpg (high/low/average)	67/54/61 mpg (high/low/average)	59/44/50 mpg (high/low/average)	55/53/54 mpg (high/low/average)
RANGE	172 mi. (including reserve)	195 mi. (including reserve)	185 mi. (including reserve)	173 mi. (including reserve)
AVAILABLE	Now	Now	Now	Now
MORE INFO AT	<a href="http://harley-davidson.com">harley-davidson.com</a>	<a href="http://powersports.honda.com">powersports.honda.com</a>	<a href="http://kawasaki.com">kawasaki.com</a>	<a href="http://starmotorcycles.com">starmotorcycles.com</a>

SUZUKI BOULEVARD M50



TRIUMPH AMERICA



OFF THE RECORD



ARI HENNING  
ROAD TEST EDITOR  
AGE: 30  
HEIGHT: 5'10"  
WEIGHT: 175 lb.  
INSEAM: 33 in.

One of the cells in our testing documents asks, "Would you recommend this bike to a friend?" If I'm honest, I would be hard-pressed to recommend a cruiser to anyone. They sacrifice too much (comfort, cornering clearance, handling, etc.) for the sake of style. But I get that some folks love the cruiser look, and for beginners this group is their entry point. And of this group, the Bolt is the standout. It's got the Harley look and feel figured out way better than the Street 750, and it works well and is fun to ride. The Bolt isn't as nimble or refined as the Honda or Kawasaki, but it is well sorted and has loads more character. It's the one I'd recommend.



JESSICA PROKUP  
GUEST TESTER  
AGE: 39  
HEIGHT: 5'5"  
WEIGHT: 115 lb.  
INSEAM: 31 in.

The Street 750, ironically, feels like a cheap imitation of a Japanese cruiser. I like the styling but not the wonky handling and lack of brakes. The M50 feels like an outdated brute that requires too much effort to wrangle. The CTX has me confused; it's the best handling and easiest to ride, but it seems like a cross-dressing sportbike. Take away the cruiser ergos, and it might as well be a naked standard. The Vulcan S is light and nimble and gets points for customizable ergos and some cool styling cues, but it lacks character in terms of sound and feel. This leaves my two favorites: the Bolt and the America. Both have abundant power, smooth handling, solid brakes, and great (if opposite) styling. If I wanted a comfortable, traditional cruiser with long-haul capabilities, I'd buy the America; if I wanted to channel my inner outlaw, I'd buy the Bolt.



ZACK COURTS  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
AGE: 31  
HEIGHT: 6'2"  
WEIGHT: 185 lb.  
INSEAM: 34 in.

I like this test because it reminds us that there are lots of good bikes out there that don't get enough attention. Case in point: Honda, Kawasaki, and Triumph have really nice, affordable options in this category. The bottom two, unfortunately, are a different story. Harley's Street 750 beats walking but otherwise has zero redeeming qualities. Actually, it's an excellent sales pitch for an 883 Iron, which is an authentic Harley for only a little more money. Suzuki's M50 engine is a nice piece and works well, but aside from that the bike is horribly dated: too much chrome and a drum rear brake that is shockingly bad. The best bike is clear to see; the Bolt doesn't have the best suspension or the best brakes or the best handling, but the motor is terrific, and it's got the attitude dialed in perfectly. Yeah, it's a "cheap" cruiser, but it's also a fun motorcycle. Period.

SUZUKI BOULEVARD M50	TRIUMPH AMERICA
\$8599	\$8399
805cc, liquid-cooled 45° V-twin	865cc, air-cooled parallel-twin
5-speed/shaft	5-speed/chain
42.4 hp @ 6000 rpm	55.9 hp @ 6700 rpm
44.1 lb.-ft. @ 2900 rpm	50.5 lb.-ft. @ 3400 rpm
Tubular-steel double-cradle	Tubular-steel double-cradle
Showa 41mm fork; 5.5-in. travel	KYB 41mm fork; 4.7-in. travel
Showa shocks adjustable for spring preload; 4.1-in. travel	KYB shocks adjustable for spring preload; 3.8-in. travel
Tokico two-piston caliper, 300mm disc	Nissin two-piston caliper, 310mm disc
Drum	Nissin two-piston caliper, 285mm disc
33.1°/5.6 in.	33.0°/5.6 in.
27.6 in.	27.2 in.
65.2 in.	63.4 in.
593/568 lb. (tank full/empty)	600/569 lb. (tank full/empty)
4.1 gal.	5.1 gal.
45/38/41 mpg (high/low/average)	52/45/48 mpg (high/low/average)
168 mi. (including reserve)	245 mi. (including reserve)
Now	Now
<a href="http://suzukicycles.com">suzukicycles.com</a>	<a href="http://triumphmotorcycles.com">triumphmotorcycles.com</a>

# 2015 SUZUKI GSX-S750

A Smooth & Sane  
Softie for the Street

THEY SAY

"Championship-winning heritage with street-smart performance..."

WE SAY

"A pleasant streetbike with 'GSX' in the name."





➔ Suzuki has elected to gently shoe into the accelerator this year after coasting along during the fallout from the economic crisis of 2008. There are hints of exciting new product in the pipeline, including, to no one's surprise, a totally new GSX-R1000 that we're speculating will break cover during this, the 30th anniversary of the brand, as a 2016 model. In the meantime, Suzuki will bring us a couple of new naked and semi-nude street models to fill out the lineup, including the GSX-S750.

A new model for the US, the GSX-S750 is not a fresh machine for Suzuki. Sold as the GSR750 in Europe since 2011, the 750 comes to the states as a price-point machine, sitting at \$7,999 in matte black (\$8,149 with the white/blue scheme that also features a deeper gold anodizing to the fork legs but no performance differences) to undercut Yamaha's successful FZ-09 by a little and Honda's smaller, fully faired CBR650F by \$500. Best, probably, not to mention the \$6,990 Yamaha FZ-07.

To hit that price point, Suzuki started with a tried-and-true engine, which is marketing speak for old. In this case, it's the GSX-R750's of 2005. For the GSX-S, there is a revised cylinder head with smaller ports feeding smaller valves. Milder cam timing too. And while the

compression ratio remains at 12.3:1, the engine has a lower rev limit: 11,250 rpm versus the GSX-R750's 14,000.

Suzuki makes the point that this is not a "detuned" GSX-R engine but rather one with Gixxer bones carefully recalibrated for improving low-end and midrange power. But the results are more or less the same. On our Dynojet dyno, the GSX-S laid down a best run of 95.3 hp at 10,200 rpm and 52.3 pound-feet of torque at 8,600 rpm. Good, solid numbers for this quasi-entry-level class but well behind what this engine is capable of. The good news is that power output slots right between the Honda CBR650F's 78 hp and the FZ-09's 105.

For the GSX-S, it's more about manners and civility than dyno-shredding power. Although this is not a ride-by-wire bike, the dual-valve electronic fuel injection is tuned for very gradual off-idle action, so the bike feels smooth, almost soft, at the first crack of the throttle. It's easy to feed the cable-operated clutch to just the right spot and have the Suz toeing off from a standstill. It has enough flywheel and low-rpm torque to make pretty much any licensed motorcyclist call it easy. For the rest of the powerband, the GSX-S feels like the 95-hp bike that it is, with good midrange and a slight upper-mid surge before gradually surrendering to the rev limiter shy of 12K.

#### EVOLUTION

Developed from the Europe-only GSR750, the GSX-S drops a circa-2005 GSX-R750 engine into a new, cost-conscious chassis for a budget streetfighter.

#### RIVALS

Aprilia Shiver 750, Honda CBR650F, Kawasaki Ninja 650, Suzuki SFV-650, Yamaha FZ-07 and FZ-09



Right: The GSX-S's kickstand presence is angular and tough—almost futuristic. Above: The bike's personality is not as rambunctious as the aesthetic (or the wheelie) might have you think.

Although its 466-pound wet weight is 48 pounds heavier than the FZ-09's, the "Gix-ess" hides that fact well. It's a little longer from seat to bar, with less bar rise and tighter footpeg-to-seat dimensions than the Yamaha, but the ergonomics are still very comfortable, and the bike feels compact. An added benefit is that the slightly more leaned-forward riding position elevates the balance point for freeway travel; most of us were happy running 80 mph despite the lack of fairing or windshield. It's amazingly smooth to 6,000 rpm, where it picks up the usual four-cylinder buzz; fortunately, the GSX-S is geared so you're still in the butter zone for most highway travel.

It's assumed that even newer motorcyclists will want to sample sporty riding, and the GSX-S is an able accomplice. Usually at this price point, the suspension is soggy and the brakes pretty ho-hum. Split decision here, since the Suzuki's KYB-sourced suspension, adjustable only for spring preload front and rear, is of higher quality and calibrated for a tauter ride than we expected. The two-piston Tokico front brakes have been obsolete for a decade; they come in very gradually and offer virtually no lever feedback. At least the GSX-S's well-chosen spring rates keep the all-steel chassis stable and allow you to enjoy the bike's neutral (if not lightning quick) steering and willingness to turn in on the

brakes. It's a totally competent-handling, middle-of-the-road sporting naked.

That descriptor is the ultimate insult for a sportbike, but it doesn't have quite the bite here in the land of the sporty, budget-priced naked machine. You're not paying Panigale money, and you're not getting Panigale performance. The trouble for the GSX-S is Yamaha. With the FZ-07 a lighter, less expensive, even more noob-friendly ride and the FZ-09 towering above it in personality (as well as sheer power), plus the \$9,399 (with standard ABS) Triumph Street Triple shooting nasty glances from the sidelines, the GSX-S faces energetic but not insurmountable competition.



**Suzuki skipped past the GSX-R parts bin when it selected mediocre Tokico two-piston brakes. ABS isn't available either.**

## OFF THE RECORD



**ZACK COURTS**  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
AGE: 31  
HEIGHT: 6'2"  
WEIGHT: 185 lb.  
INSEAM: 34 in.

**A few years ago, this GSX-S 750 would have been a credible competitor in the naked middle-weight class—not as sharp as Triumph's Street Triple but a little cheaper and more along the lines of Yamaha's now-retired FZ8 (which I really liked, incidentally). And when this bike debuted in Europe in 2011, that's**

**presumably what it was: a convincing rival. An inline-four with decent midrange, modern styling, and a sporty riding position make for a polite and useable bike. It's even got some nice touches: The GSX-R gearbox it inherited is excellent, the mirrors are great, and the suspension is appropriately taut.**

**However, the "Gix-ess" is too late to the American party. Maybe when it debuted it was a good option but not anymore. Not with the likes of Yamaha's FZ-09 and FZ-07 in opposing showrooms. Yamaha has the affordable naked-sport market covered, plain and simple.**



## TECH SPEC

PRICE	\$7999
ENGINE	749cc, liquid-cooled inline-four
TRANS/FINAL DRIVE	6-speed/chain
MEASURED POWER	95.3 hp @ 10,200 rpm
MEASURED TORQUE	52.3 lb.-ft. @ 8600 rpm
FRAME	Steel twin-spar
FRONT SUSPENSION	KYB 43mm fork adjustable for spring preload; 4.7-in. travel
REAR SUSPENSION	KYB shock adjustable for spring preload; 5.3-in. travel
FRONT BRAKE	Tokico two-piston calipers, 310mm discs
REAR BRAKE	Tokico one-piston caliper, 240mm disc
RAKE/TRAIL	25.3°/4.1 in.
SEAT HEIGHT	32.1 in.
WHEELBASE	57.1 in.
FUEL CAPACITY	4.6 gal.
MEASURED WEIGHT	466/438 lb. (tank full/empty)
AVAILABLE	Now
MORE INFO AT	<a href="http://suzukicycles.com">suzukicycles.com</a>

## VERDICT

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**A calm, reassured, unfaired middleweight with a little GSX-R lineage.**





## THE \$8K QUESTION

Two machines inhabiting the same class and packing essentially the same price tag could not be more different than the GSX-S750 and Yamaha's raucous little FZ-09. Where the Suzuki is staid, the Fizzer is wild, with more torque, sharper handling, and a megaton more character. We've whined about the 2014 FZ's jumpy throttle response, it's true, but Yamaha did the model a solid for '15—its fueling is vastly improved, though it remains a relative live wire compared to the Suzuki, whose low-rpm responsiveness can best be described

as soft. The Yamaha's more upright riding position makes it less comfortable at highway speeds, but it also has more legroom, a consideration for taller riders. And where the Suzuki's firmer suspension keeps the chassis level, the lightly sprung Yamaha seems always in motion, which, while not ideal, fits its personality perfectly. Our recommendation? No question the Suzuki is the better choice for low-experience riders or those coming up from smaller bikes. The Yamaha takes a little more taming, but you'll be happy with it for longer.



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ROOTS



# THE MAXIMUM MINI

Honda's Z50 Mini Trail—the Ultimate Two-Wheel Time Machine

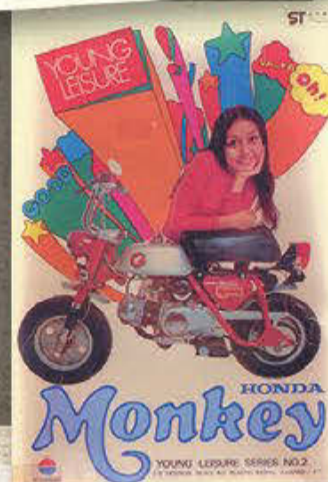
WORDS: Mitch Boehm / PHOTOS: Brian Nitto, Jan Harde

MINI TRAIL DR.



## THROWBACK

Honda's marketing prowess nearly matched its engineering capabilities in the 1960s and '70s. Above: The Mini Trail was part of a fun-loving, get-everyone-riding family in 1970. Right: The comical sight of a full-size human aboard the Z50 suggested the nickname "monkey bike."



It's amazing to consider, but 45 years ago this summer (Whoa! Can that be right?), my life's trajectory was forever altered by, of all things, a two-minute ride on a tiny, yellow minibike. It was a hardtail with folding bars, a chunky seat, and little knobby tires, and after a few laps of my uncle's front yard I whiskey-throttled myself and it right into a big ol' bush. It was an inglorious end to my first-ever ride, but it's led to several lifetimes' worth of grins.

I'll wager that plenty of you have a similar story. And I'm betting that many of those epic first rides were aboard the same machine I took mine on: Honda's legendary Mini Trail, or Z50.

The Z50 wasn't just a minibike. It was (and is) an *institution*, a chunk of motorized nirvana on the scale of the Schwinn Sting Ray, and a machine that focused the attention of young boys (and some girls, no doubt) in a way that nothing else on earth could. When my buddy Mike Starr got a blue one that Christmas I couldn't take my eyes off it. And while he only let me ride it a couple times (the nerve!), the nagging it generated at home resulted in a red SL70 finding its way into our garage the following Christmas. Bliss...

Little doubt, then, that the Mini Trail is probably responsible for more two-wheeled addictions than any other motorcycle on earth. With more than a million sold over the years (first as the Z50, then the XR50, and lately the CRF50), it's certainly believable. There aren't many so-called foundational motorcycles in our world, but Honda's Z50 certainly qualifies.

The Z50 debuted in the US in 1968 but had roots reaching all the way back to the early 1960s and Honda's then-new Suzuka Circuit, which included an amusement park called Motopia. The park featured motorized vehicle "rides" that would, according to Soichiro Honda's right-hand man Takeo Fujisawa,

"allow visitors to experience the joys of driving." One of these featured a tiny prototype cooked up by engineers called the Z100, which used the 50cc pushrod single from the Honda Cub, a hardtail frame, and 5-inch wheels. It quickly became the park's most popular attraction, and because riders looked so simian-like while aboard the tiny bikes, the term "monkey bike" quickly took hold.

The Z100 was never available for sale (a few are in the hands of collectors), but Honda, always adept at recognizing a promising niche, revamped the concept in 1963 with the CZ100, a similar machine using a different frame and body. The bike was strange looking but street legal and sold in several European and Asian countries (though not in the US), doing reasonably well during the mid-1960s with few changes. Like the Z100, it remains extremely collectible.

Here in the US the minibike thing was about to burst wide open, with many thousands of tube-framed, lawnmower-engined hardtail minibikes being sold by companies such as L'il Indian, Fox, Cat, Rupp, Bonanza, Burro, Taco, Bronco, Scat Cat, Power-Dyne, and others. Most were loud, ill handling, and physically jarring to ride. But for thousands upon thousands of wide-eyed kids, they represented nothing less than the coveted entry into a motorized two-wheel world. Honda, generating massive sales and reputational momentum in the US by the mid-1960s with clean-cut marketing and inexpensive, reliable motorcycles that nearly everyone seemed to like, took note of the minibike craze and began piecing together a plan.

"Mr. Honda was in the US a lot during the mid-1960s," says Z50 collector and expert Jeff Tuttobene. "He saw all this minibike activity but couldn't help but notice all the crude engineering and knew [Honda] could do much better." Honda had just introduced a



**Mike Maciejko's Z50 collection includes more than this pristine red K-zero; there's also a red '69 K1 (middle) and blue '70 K1, among others. Below left: Z100 prototype. Below right: CZ100.**

"The machine the R&D team came up with months later was indeed American flavored, with larger wheels, knobby tires, front and rear brakes..."

new-generation mini for Europe and Asia called the Z50M, which featured a folding handlebar and the new OHC Cub engine. But when it didn't appear Stateside, dealers voiced their displeasure—which forced engineers to fast track a version designed specifically for the US.

"American Honda didn't have its own R&D arm at that point," says longtime American Honda product research/testing veteran Bob Doornbos of the Japanese engineers, "but they'd come over for research and testing, and we'd help them as much as we could."

The machine the R&D team came up with months later was indeed American flavored, with larger wheels, knobby tires, front and rear brakes, front suspension, high-mount fenders, and an adjustable seat. The result was an off-road-only



mini called the Z50A, or Mini-Trail. Honda didn't know it at the time, but the minibike terra firma in the US was about to be shaken to its very core.

"I first saw the bike at that year's dealer meeting," Doornbos remembers, "and expectations weren't all that high. We had two types of dealers then, so-called '50-90cc' dealers and full-line dealers. The 50-90 stores carried only little bikes and were typically sporting good stores, bicycle shops, et cetera." Honda management surely looked to these smaller, mini-focused shops to help sell the new machine, but what happened as soon as the bikes began to arrive two to a crate at both types of dealerships shocked everyone. "There was huge demand," Doornbos says, "and we were backordered almost immediately. It was crazy. People—kids *and* adults—were riding them everywhere, on the street, in the dirt. It was so versatile and inexpensive too. Just toss it into the trunk and haul it anywhere."



"The Mini-Trail astounded the mini-bike world," Tuttobene says. "A three-speed with automatic clutch, real brakes, knobbies, a spark arrestor, and folding bars so Mom or Dad could stow the thing in the trunk and drop their kid off at the local riding spot. My mom loved it." But kids loved it more.

Amazingly, Honda sold 50,000 Mini-Trails in the first year despite the back orders. Suggested retail was \$239. The first thousand or so bikes were slightly different than later first-generation models, Honda making changes to parts and processes even while bikes were moving along the assembly line. These first Z50As are known today as "slant guard" bikes by virtue of the angled exhaust guard bridging the rear frame tubes. Other details include a slightly taller handlebar than 1969-and-beyond bikes, white grips, red/white and yellow/white paint options, no muffler stinger, #415 chain and sprockets (later updated



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# ROOTS

“The ‘Flying Freckle’ not only rode Z50s but raced them as a seven-year-old for Herb Friedlander’s Honda shop in scrambles and TT events around Southern California.”



How many kids recognized this as the engine of freedom? Today, the pattering of one at idle or tinkling of the fins as it cools after a ride can make grown men well up.

to 420), painted silver fenders, and an under-tank on/off toggle switch.

Honda made some significant changes for '69, adding a headlight and taillight, battery, lower bars, a reshaped seat, chrome fenders and chain guard, and a proper key switch. Nearly 100,000 were sold. More changes came in 1970, including a longer muffler stinger and rear fender. A new tank graphic made an appearance, as did a pebble-grain seat cover, aluminum levers, and a rear-brake pedal. Honda also nixed the K2's battery and box, going with a magneto that allowed the lights to work while the bike was running—and then not very well. “It was like riding at night with a birthday candle!” says Z50 aficionado Mike Maciejko, who owns many of the bikes photographed for this story. Even more were sold that year.

“It was a crazy time,” says Robert Williams, whose family opened Fairway Honda in Somers Point, New Jersey, in the late 1960s. “We sold the heck out of the Z50s in those early years. They were everywhere—part of life as we knew it.”

Some of motorcycling's legends spent time aboard Mini Trails, including AMA motocross champion Jeff Ward. The “Flying Freckle” not only rode Z50s but raced them as a seven-year-old for Herb Friedlander's Honda shop in scrambles and TT events around Southern California. Ward's most famous Mini-Trail moment came in Bruce Brown's *On Any Sunday* documentary. “I was riding my Mini-Trail at Saddleback Park,” Ward says, “and I saw this guy with a camera shooting a guy doing wheelies on a trials bike. I did a couple wheelies and the guy pointed the camera in my direction as I

rode by standing on the pegs. I had no idea what he was doing until I saw the movie in the theater with my dad months later!”

Big changes came in '72 with the K3 model, Honda switching to a new frame and rear suspension along with a host of other detail changes. Sales continued to be strong, the bike quickly becoming the minibike standard of the world, its personality, functionality, and durability ensuring its place in history—and kids' minds—for many years to come.

Although the original A-model morphed into the sportier Z50R in '79 and eventually became the XR50 in the early 2000s, the spirit of the original bike lives on as the CRF50—a small, lightweight, good-looking and dead-reliable mini that kids seem unnaturally attracted to.

But for most boomers and Gen Xers, it's those early-generation Mini Trails that stoke memories of those epic first rides most effectively. If I close my eyes I can still see, hear, and smell my uncle's pale yellow/white K-Zero...right along with the bush I buried us in!

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# Riding Down Under DOWN UNDER

## Covering New Zealand's Two Islands in Two Weeks on Two Wheels

WORDS & PHOTOS: Peter Starr

“Good morning and welcome to New Zealand,” the immigration officer said. “And please remember we drive on the *correct* side of the road here.” “Smart arse,” I muttered under my breath, with a less-than-believable attempt at a New Zealand accent, and made a mental note to stick to the left side of the road to avoid a head-on with a bus or one of the ever-present rental RVs that crowd some of the country’s many stunning roads.

The ocean breeze propelled clean air across the isthmus, giving Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city, a sense of continuous freshness. The entire country is just about the size of Colorado, divided between two main islands set deep in the South Pacific, about 14 hours aboard Air New Zealand from Los Angeles. Most of the country’s 4.4 million live on the North Island, where Auckland is located.





**Above: A mob of motorcyclists wait to board the ferry to the South Island. Right: New Zealand, a country with 4.4 million people and allegedly 40 million sheep!**



I set out from Auckland with two weeks' worth of "stuff" packed into the panniers and top box of a borrowed Suzuki V-Strom 1000, with the excess squeezed into a waterproof duffel strapped across the passenger seat. The term "freeway" is rarely used in New Zealand because basically they have none, with the exception of a 28-mile stretch of Highway 1 south from Auckland, which makes New Zealand a nirvana for motorcyclists. Turning left off Highway 1 at Bombay, I was soon in a rural area with very light traffic. Perfect for a Saturday afternoon ride.

Strange names of obvious indigenous Maori derivation flew by as I wound through small towns and farming villages: Ngatea, Paeroa, Katikati... I have mixed feelings about GPS; on previous trips with other brands I had found myself not exactly where I planned to be. Leaving Tauranga, however, I decided to trust the "curvy roads" option on my Garmin Zumo. It was the right move, and it chose a great road from Tauranga to Rotorua, all fast sweepers alternating through coniferous forests and grass farmlands. Sheep and cows are grass-fed here, not housed in feedlots.

Rotorua is geyser country and one of the centers of the Maori culture. Like Native American tribes, the Maori are not one homogenous group. The Maori nation was made up of many warring tribes who battled for supremacy. I learned a lot about New Zealand's pre-British history at the Te Puia Cultural center. (The Brits never conquered New

Zealand; a partnership treaty brought this country under British rule and protection.)

That evening I dined at the Aorangi Peak restaurant with its 180-degree view overlooking Rotorua Lake. The board at the restaurant entrance read: "No Man is rich enough to buy back his past, so enjoy the moment." I hardly ever eat meat, but when the owner insisted I try their local lamb, of course I said yes. It was so good it could almost have turned me back into a carnivore.

The 78-kilometer road to Taupo seemed to be designed for two-wheeled pleasure. Taupo, in the center of the North Island, has the largest lake in New Zealand (239 square miles, roughly the same size as Arizona's Lake Mead), and it is also the home of two-time World Champion and three-time American Superbike Champion Fred Merkel, who I worked with during the filming of my movie *Take it to the Limit* back in the early '80s. Fred, who is married with a family and now owns an engineering company, has lived there for more than 20 years. Why Taupo? "The trout fishing in this lake," he says, simply. Yes, there is a normal life after winning multiple world championships.

Taupo to Napier was very cold—so cold the ice warning light on the V-Strom dash was illuminated most of the time. My first stop in Napier, then, was to buy



**Above: That's Mount Cook, the highest point in New Zealand at 12,316 feet, behind the Suzuki V-Strom 1000. Above right: Skimming across four inches of water in a 700-hp jetboat—yeah, it's a rush!**



“The term ‘freeway’ is rarely used in New Zealand because basically they have none, which makes it a nirvana for motorcyclists.”

merino-wool underwear. Destroyed by a 7.8 earthquake in 1931, the whole city was rebuilt in the style of the day—Art Deco—and remains today the largest collection of Art Deco buildings in the world. During dinner and wine (Napier sits in the center of Hawke's Bay wine country) I was told the weather was turning and the ferries across the Cook Strait had been canceled for the next day, when I was scheduled to travel to the South Island. A large storm was heading north directly into my path.

Dressed in my new wool thermals and rain gear, I headed south out of Napier the next day, into very heavy cross-winds. Light rain started at my first gas stop in the cute Danish community of Dannevirke and got heavier as I passed through Woodville and continued to Plimmerton on the west coast. That night I stayed with a fellow motorcyclist, John Forsythe, who performed a special Kiwi

beer-drinking dance with some of his crazy off-roader friends, and—believe it or not—the rain stopped! The weather actually looked promising as I rode out in the 5 a.m. dark toward Wellington for the first ferry of the day, the Bluebridge Straitsman, where I joined a couple dozen other riders in light chop across the Cook Strait.

Off-loading from the ferry, I had no time to dally if I was to get to Kaikoura, some two hours south, in time for an albatross encounter I had booked. I rolled into Kaikoura at 4 p.m., and by 4:15 I was on board a boat heading 3 miles out to sea. The sea was choppy, but the rewards were plenty, as we saw three species of great albatross, including the elusive wandering albatross, the legendary bird of many a sea-tale with a wingspan of 12 feet.

The longest day's ride of my entire trip was from Kaikoura to Aoraki/

Mount Cook, 320 miles through some outstanding countryside with very little traffic and only one policeman. Aoraki/Mount Cook is the highest in New Zealand at 12,316 feet and is part of the Southern Alps range that runs the length of the South Island. Mount Cook village is also the home of the Sir Edmund Hillary Museum, celebrating the first man to climb Mount Everest in May of 1953. If you like the solitude and grandeur that seems to accompany alpine villages, this is a must-stop.

Riding from Mount Cook to Queenstown took me back alongside Lake Pukaki and south along Highway 6 through Twizel. The low road to Queenstown looked dull, so I chose instead to take the Crown Range Road, a tight, twisty mountain pass that, as it descends into Queenstown, has a challenging series of very tight hairpin turns. Great for a motorcycle but not so good for the many campervans full of tourists I seemed forever stuck behind.

Queenstown is a tourist haven at the south end of Lake Wakatipu and for me it was a jumping off point for three adventures, the first of which was the Shotover River Jet Boat ride. YouTube videos do not prepare you for the experience of 700-hp boats that can operate in as little as 4 inches of water and rocket through the canyons barely skimming the rocks, sand bars, and other potential disasters.

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“No man is rich enough to buy back his past, so enjoy the moment.”



**Left: Oreti Beach, where Burt Munro set many a speed record. Bottom left: You can see Munro's streamliner in the museum dedicated to his memory in nearby Invercargill. Top right: Fog settling over one of New Zealand's many fjords. Middle right: a fine spot for lunch. Bottom right: A unique, open-air cab.**



It was one of the best \$140 I ever spent! That evening's dinner cruise on the TSS Earnslaw vintage steamship was the exact opposite, a slow go on a 100-year-old, 170-foot steamer that burns a ton of coal each hour.

My third adventure was airborne, a 40-minute flight through the snow-covered mountains between Queenstown and the fjord of Milford Sound in an expertly piloted, six-seat Airvan single-engine plane that brought Jimi Hendrix lyrics sharply into focus: “Excuse me while I kiss the sky!” Only we were kissing the glaciers and granite peaks of New Zealand's alpine range. This was my day off from riding, and I doubt that I could have spent it any better.

After so many days of perfect riding weather, I probably deserved the cloudy and cold 120-mile ride from Queenstown to Invercargill, where I stopped to visit friend and author Tim Hanna—best known for his fine book about the all-Kiwi hero John Britten. Invercargill is probably better known to most motorcyclists as the home of Burt Munro of *The World's Fastest Indian* fame. A museum dedicated to his memory is located inside a huge hardware store and cared for by

Neville Hayes. Neville's father Norman sponsored Burt's trips to Bonneville and the museum displays his bikes and a collection of pistons and other home-made parts that Burt created, alongside Hayes's father's own collection of vintage and antique bikes.

Ten kilometers west of Invercargill is Oreti Beach, a key location for *The World's Fastest Indian* film. At 26 kilometers in length, the beach provided Munro with a testing and racing site for his modified Indian motorcycle, and it was there in February 1957 Munro set a New Zealand Open Beach record of 131.38 mph. Every year now there is the Burt Munro Challenge (see page 54), with some races held on the beach.

The road to Dunedin on the east coast is one more two-lane rhapsody where I found myself just floating around bends and over hills. That day's riding ended at a local dealership owned by Dennis Ireland, a fascinating character who won the 1979 500cc Belgian Grand Prix and the Isle of Man TT.

My time was running out, so I chose a fast route along the main highway to Christchurch, a city that was devastated by an earthquake in 2011 that killed

185 people. The rebuild has not been easy, but Kiwis are very resourceful—as evidenced by the shopping mall fabricated completely from shipping containers. The “temporary” shopping mall has been so successful that the city is thinking of keeping it as a tourist attraction.

It was a beautiful but somewhat saddening ride back to Picton to catch the ferry back to the North Island, mainly because I knew my ride was coming to an end soon. Just one more day to take the bike back to Suzuki headquarters at Wanganui and then a few hours to spend with New Zealand racing pioneer Rod Coleman—now 88 years old, he was the first Kiwi to win an Isle of Man TT in 1953—four-time World Champion Hugh Anderson, and Ken McIntosh, the world-famous purveyor of Manx Nortons, before my flight home.

Hopefully I'll have the chance to return to New Zealand again. It's such an amazing country that has so much to offer the erstwhile adventure tourer—whether it's actual riding or all the very good reasons to park your bike and sample the diverse range of other experiences and encounters.



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# The Burt Munro CHALLENGE

The Entire World of Motorcycling—in One Weekend

WORDS & PHOTOS: Joe Gresh

Streamliners, supermotos, speedway sidecars, vintage road racers—you can see all those and more in action at the Burt Munro Challenge, all to celebrate the memory of one very humble (and very stubborn) Kiwi-born motorcycle racer.



More south than you've ever been, on the south end of the South Island of New Zealand, once lived a motorcyclist named Burt Munro. For a country with a total population less than half the Los Angeles basin, New Zealanders have an uncanny habit of punching far above their weight (see also: rugby, sailing, wool production). Burt Munro was no different, single-handedly modifying an ancient Indian motorcycle into a Bonneville land-speed record holder and taking up permanent residence in our collective imagination after Sir Anthony Hopkins played him in the movie *The World's Fastest Indian*.

In Burt's hometown of Invercargill, the Southland Motorcycle Club (SMC) holds an annual rally in his honor, called The Burt Munro Challenge. The SMC puts on an entire racing season in a single weekend. Classes include several divisions each of modern and vintage motorcycles, competing on everything from a conventional road circuit to city streets to a dirt track to the same stretch of beach where Munro once made speed runs in his famous streamliner.

Two circus-size tents, one for food and one for bands, dominate the large field adjacent to Teretonga Park road course and Oreti Park Speedway. Brightly colored dome tents and 1,000 motorcycles huddle along the tree line to the west. A half mile away, on Oreti Beach, competitors sprint down the long, smooth sand on everything from vintage Ridges to modern Yamahas to Harley-Davidson Sportsters. Sand and salt spray blast into the dunes, scouring spectators' eyes. You've got to really love motorcycles to be here.

The next morning dawns chilly and overcast. Rain starts as soon as I arrive at Teretonga Park for the Burt Munro Challenge Road Race series and persists for the remainder of the day. Races run rain or shine. This close to the Antarctic, there are no do-overs. Between down-pours the sun shines and the wind blasts. Tire selection is critical: The track surface in a single lap can vary from damp to submerged.

At Oreti Park speedway, the heat races start shortly after the Teretonga Road Races finish. This small dirt oval contains

the best racing. Fast, handlebar tangling, four-lap heats are do or die. Specially constructed sidecars, wheels already tilted toward the inside of the track, run clockwise, opposite the motorcycles (not simultaneously). Alternating the circulation, spectators crowding the barriers receive an even coat of sticky dirt.

Ten hours of racing and I bail. Burt would not be happy, but I'm going to town, where the main streets of Wyndham are barricaded off to form an intimate street course. Another full slate of racing is on tap. You get your money's worth when you register for SMC's Burt Munro Challenge.

The three-day rally ends with a sigh, moto-pilgrims dispersing by ones and twos throughout today's final track sessions. It's an inspired gathering of real motorcyclists and one worth traveling halfway around the world to attend. We join the melancholy exodus out of town, turning east onto the quiet, post-rally highway and twisting the throttle on the Victory Road Annihilator, traveling considerably slower than Mr. Munro would have preferred.

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[rokker-usa.com](http://rokker-usa.com)

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The compact profile and advanced aerodynamic design slices through the air while reducing buffeting from side-winds.



## HELD AIR N DRY GLOVES

Those transition seasons—spring and fall—serve up some of the best riding you'll find as well as introducing "the great glove conundrum." When the weather can go from warmish and dry to cool and wet in an instant, should you wear vented or waterproof mitts?

Held's answer to the conundrum is the Air n Dry gloves. (Note that these Held-made gloves are also sold by BMW dealers as the Two in One gloves; they have slightly different graphics and perforations on the palm.) On the outside, the Air n Drys look like sport-touring gloves with a Cordura shell, plastic knuckle protection, and medium-length gauntlets. The left index finger has an integrated squeegee.

It's when you go to put them on that you notice something is different. The Air n Drys have two pockets. Slide your hands into the main pockets and they'll be surrounded by waterproof Gore-Tex and a thin layer of insulation. Here, the AnD is an effective mid-season cool-weather glove, comfortable down to the high-40s. Also, I can attest that, in this configuration, the AnD is totally waterproof.

But slide your hands into the other compartment and the gloves become comfortable for much warmer weather. How? Because now your hands are beneath the Gore-Tex socks and just inside of the perforated palms.

Both the Held and BMW-branded versions have done well over a season of riding, with no tears or loose threads or any other visible sign of distress. Save for one: The light-colored palms began to look a bit dingy within a few weeks. Better opt for the darker variations. Both versions of the gloves are available in a full range of sizes, with Held also offering "slim" and "stocky" cuts as well as woman-specific sizes. —Marc Cook



➔ **HELD AIR N DRY GLOVES**

**PRICE:** \$250 for the Held version; \$209 for BMW's Two in One

**CONTACT:** [heldusa.com](http://heldusa.com) or [bmwmotorcycles.com](http://bmwmotorcycles.com)

**VERDICT:** 7/10

Comfort and convenience for transition-season riding, at a price.

## ROWE ELECTRONICS PDM60 POWER DISTRIBUTION MODULE

Adding a bunch of electrical accessories to your bike can leave you with a mess of wires running under the bodywork. One way to keep things tidy is the Rowe Electronics PDM60 Power Distribution Module, which I installed on my long-term Suzuki V-Strom. A bit larger than a deck of cards, the PDM60 has six power circuits protected by electronic circuit breakers and fed by a single lead to the battery.

Each circuit can be assigned a maximum current level—three at 10 amps, two at 15, and one at 20 amps—but total current is limited to 60 amps. And all programming is done through a proprietary USB cable to a PC running Windows. You can program each circuit to come on with vehicle power, a wire going to ground (for use with a separate switch), or both. Finally, the individual circuits can be set to come on after a delay (to reduce load for starting) and/or stay on for as long as 10 minutes after you shut the bike down. Neat.

Installation is easy. I found a good place under the seat for the PDM, within easy reach of the battery. Power leads are just dangling wires, but the system comes with Posi-Lock butt splices. On my long-term V-Strom, I'm using three of the six circuits for power to the top box, GPS, and a cord for heated gear. Over six months of constant use, the PDM has been dead reliable. In fact, my only complaint is that the USB connection is on the bottom of the sealed box, so you might have to dismount the unit to gain access to the port. In all, this is a clever piece of engineering that turns a bundle of wires, fuses, and relays into a neat, elegant package.

—Marc Cook



➔ **ROWE ELECTRONICS  
PDM60 POWER DISTRIBUTION MODULE**

**PRICE:** \$170

**CONTACT:** [altrider.com](http://altrider.com)

**VERDICT:** 7/10

Just the ticket for farkle-obsessed owners looking for a sophisticated, versatile power-distribution system.

ALL OTHER BATTERIES ARE  
**GREEN**  
**WITH**  
**ENVY.**



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Lithium Iron Phosphate – the most advanced battery technology available  
for your bike. Ultra high cranking amps from a super lightweight battery.  
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## SIDI ARMADA BOOTS

➡ I'm hard on boots. Really a sole crusher, if you'll pardon the pun. Which is why I tend to like slightly heftier footwear. When Sidi introduced the Adventure Gore-Tex boot, I gravitated toward it for most of my dual-sport riding because it has elements of a dirt boot and a touring boot built into one, though its stiff construction makes it feel more like an off-road boot.

My boot nirvana arrived when Sidi introduced the Armada Gore-Tex boot. Imagine the Adventure with a bit less starch, conceptually moved a notch in the direction of a heavy-duty touring boot. Instead of the Adventure's buckles and plastic ankle support, the Armada uses an interior zipper with rain flap and a simple wrap-around shin reinforcement that can be removed to make the boot feel a little more flexible.

The lug soles are thick but reasonably flexible, with much less of the Herman Munster walk that you tend to get from the Adventure. And yet the Armadas feel extremely sturdy, far more so than typical touring boots. The boots feel just right for the mix of touring and not-terribly-technical off-roading that you're likely to do on your BMW GS or KTM Adventure.

The ideal compromise. With durability. Like I said, I'm hard on boots. And yet I've worn the Armadas nearly every day for a year and a half. (The boot at the back of the photo is new, at the front, used.) The tops are a little scuffed, but the soles are still fine and the boots show little wear otherwise. Better yet, they remain totally waterproof. I've worn this set on rainy rides without any leakage. It's true the boot feels a little stuffy in hot weather, and it's not something I'd want to wear to a trackday, but I'll take those as compromises for the Armada's durability, stability, and protection. —Marc Cook



### SIDI ARMADA BOOTS

PRICE: \$400

CONTACT: [motonation.com](http://motonation.com)

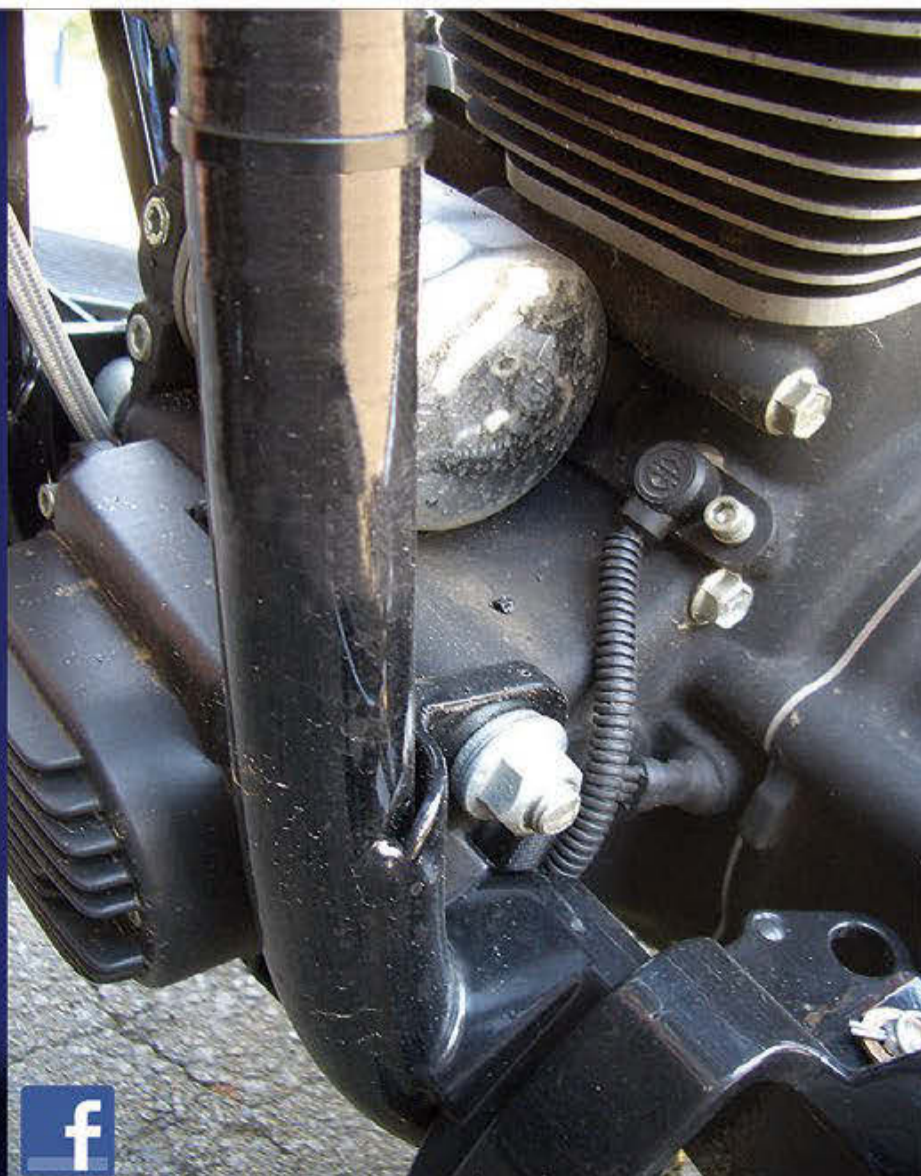
VERDICT: 8/10

The nearly perfect crossover ADV/touring boot that's comfortable and waterproof. Not cheap but worth it.

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**RIDE THE 2015**

# ADVENTURE RALLY

S E R I E S

**MOTOR  
CYCLIST**

EPIC SPOTS > FUN CHALLENGES > ADVENTURE RIDING DEFINED

## Ride the Rockies

JULY 9-12, GUNNISON, COLORADO

## Ride the Sierras

SEPTEMBER 24-27, LAKESHORE, CALIFORNIA



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Enjoy a staggering combination of riding, from twisty asphalt to gnarled off-road.

Self navigation means you ride with just your teammates, avoiding the conga line of dust often found in large group rides. Choose to rack up miles or keep it technical.

Base camp activities include special tests, vendors, food, fun, and more. If you like rides with something different around every corner, these are for you!



# Three Days of Riding You Will Never Forget

Adventure Rally events involve three all-inclusive days including rooming, food, navigational materials, rider skill challenges, and more. Take in incredibly diverse riding, truly discovering these epic locations.

## The Ride:

- Options for riders of varying skill levels.
- Navigate from a custom map and clue book with 70-plus bonus locations. Divided into green (paved), blue (dirt road/easy off-road), and black (difficult off-road) with a point value based on the time from Base Camp.
- Instagram helps us track your location and award your team points.
- This is a team event. Two or more make a team.



## Included:

- A comfy bed (surrounded by a room) for all three nights
  - Three tasty dinners (one a night)
  - Six tickets you can exchange for the drink of your choice (use them as you wish)
  - Three tasty breakfasts (one a morning)
  - Custom map & clue book (one set per rider)
  - T-shirt (sized to fit you)
  - A goodie stuffed bag of goodies
  - Sticky stickers you can stick
  - Nightly presentations
  - Nightly awards
  - Meet your favorite magazine editors and industry guests
  - TONS of giveaways including a Badlands adventure jacket and pants from Klim.
  - A chance to win the Adventure Cup!
- \*Check out the website for more details and options!

## Powered by BMW



With the introduction of the GS model in the early '80s, BMW changed motorcycling forever. Although the name "Adventure" took a few years to fully define the category, few can argue that BMW's GS both created and fueled this segment's popularity today. Join BMW staffers as they take part in the fun at this year's rallies—giving attendees the chance to experience the latest BMW adventure motorcycles and accessories.

**BMW Motorcycles "Make Life a Ride"**

Event Sponsors:



## Base Camp:

Base Camps serve as daily start and ending points as well as the venue for special tests, vendor displays, presentations, great meals, and more.



## Gunnison, Colorado July 9-12, 2015

Adventure Rally–Rockies Edition is based at The Inn at Tomichi Village, smack dab in the middle of Colorado's best adventure riding. Motorcyclists annually flock to Gunnison for riding ranging from lush valleys to high alpine peaks.



## Lakeshore, California September 24-27, 2015

Adventure Rally–Sierra Edition sits nearly 8,000 feet above the California Central Valley floor at the China Peak Ski Resort. The region is rich with roads and trails for hydroelectric, logging, mining, and cattle. However, from behind the handlebars of your bike, you'll swear the area was created just for motorcycles!

## Dress for success with Klim

For years the question of how to dress for an adventure ride perplexed the most experienced of riders. Klim has consistently introduced innovations and advancements with gear that is both protective and versatile for a wide range of riding keeping you comfy, focused and moving forward.



Learn More At

[www.cycleworld.com/adventurerally](http://www.cycleworld.com/adventurerally)

# SPECIAL TESTS

**You're special.**

**We have tests to prove it!**

The goal of the Adventure Rally is to provide a legitimate yet enjoyable, competitive atmosphere for adventure riding, rewarding key skills in bike handling, navigation, and resourcefulness. We created a few riding special tests to help tune and test these skills!

The first tests are trials types, featuring tight turns, hills, and obstacles like rocks or sand. Non-timed, each has easy and hard splits. Scoring awards one point for the easy line, no matter how many times you put a foot down (called a "dab"), two points for the hard line, regardless of dabs, and three points for a clean of the hard line. With the splits, the same course becomes a challenge for everyone—novice to expert. One point will probably not decide the overall. Putting together a clean run is fun to try, fun to watch, and fun to heckle teammates' attempts!

The second test type is a timed gymkhana. This is a combination of figure eights and slalom weaves anyone can complete but with the added pressure of the clock. Points are awarded based on time brackets: three points to those in the fastest bracket and so on.



In addition to being a good test of skill, these elements provide a great opportunity for learning and improvement. The judges are happy to help all participants with some coaching, and simply trying the same challenge a few times is a rewarding way to learn what works (and what doesn't).

Please take the competitive aspects of the event as seriously (or not) as you prefer. Regardless, these special tests make for great motorcycle fun and help improve your riding skill.



# Five Questions About Insuring Your ADV Motorcycle

Brought to you by

**GEICO**  
Motorcycle®

Adventure motorcycles' versatility makes their insurance needs a bit different from traditional motorcycles. We asked GEICO to help us understand what adventurer owners should know about insurance.

## 1 Does my insurance coverage stop when I go off-road?

Coverage would apply while the bike is being operated off-road.

## 2 Are accessories like GPS, panniers, crash protection, aftermarket exhaust, and other items I have added to my motorcycle covered?

As long as accessories are attached to the motorcycle, the accessories will be valued at their actual cash value at the time of a covered loss not to exceed the accessory limit on the policy.

## 3 What about coverage in foreign countries?

The GEICO Motorcycle policy provides coverage in the United States of America, its territories or possessions, Puerto Rico, and Canada.

With the exception of Canada, coverage from the GEICO Motorcycle policy would not apply in foreign countries. Canada does require a special ID card that you would need to acquire from us before traveling across the border.

We do have other options available to acquire coverage for travel outside the United States. Our MOAT Department is able to offer coverage for GEICO auto/cycle/RV policyholders traveling to Mexico temporarily. These policies can be purchased for one day or for up to a year.

GEICO also offers Overseas Insurance. If you're taking your own car or motorcycle overseas for personal travel, chances are we've got a policy for you! We even offer marine insurance to help cover your vehicle during shipping. Need coverage for your belongings? GEICO can help you with overseas personal property insurance too!

## 4 Given that I ride off-road occasionally, how much coverage do I really need?

It is important to consider the current value of your bike when determining whether to carry Physical Damage Coverage for your bike. Every situation is different, and our motorcycle-trained experts are always willing to help explain the coverage we offer to help determine the right policy for the individual rider.

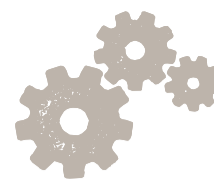
## 5 Is my bike covered when being towed or hauled?

Yes. The bike would be covered while being towed as long as the appropriate Physical Damage Coverage is on the policy.

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MILES THIS MONTH

4207

Average mpg will go way up with a Zero S added to the fleet!

## GARAGE MA-HELL

A fact of life for city dwellers, the parking garage offers both protection for your ride and opportunities for things to go way wrong. Enter this concrete den of inequity with your eyes open and wits about you.

- Even more so than on the street, you'll be hard for drivers to see. Avoid riding at the edges of the lane so that drivers reversing out of parking spaces have a chance to see you.
- Stay on high alert for brake and backup lights. Assume that no one sees you and that any car can leap out of a space with little to no warning.
- Watch the surface carefully. Parking garages don't have the benefit of exposure to rain that can wash away oil and dirt. When it does rain, cars tend to drag water over road junk, making for a slippery mess.
- Never cut the corners. It's hard enough for drivers to see other cars around support pillars and parked cars; it's nearly impossible for those drivers to see you under the same conditions.



## DECODER RING

### E10 = Ethanol In Your Fuel

So-called E10 fuel is conventional gasoline with 10 percent added ethanol (a grain alcohol derived from corn). A controversial "solution" to domestic energy independence, ethanol can act as an octane improver. Pure ethanol fuel (E100) has an octane rating of 108-113, but it has less energy density than gasoline. As a result, vehicles running E10 see a reduction in fuel efficiency.






TIM SUTTON

# GASOLINE 101

## PART 1: Origin, Additives, and Octane

 On any given day, Americans burn through some 368 million gallons of gasoline. We have a serious appetite for the stuff, but besides fussing over its price, how much thought do you give to gasoline? When so much pride and concern is fixed to your bike's performance, how much do you know about the flammable liquid that makes it all happen?

Strap in, kiddos, because in this issue and the next you're going to get a crash course on gasoline.

Despite terms like "dinosaur juice" and "fossil fuel," petroleum products aren't formed from the remains of prehistoric reptiles. According to people who study this stuff, we have ancient marine plants like plankton to thank for all the black gold we burn.

Before it gets to your bike's tank, gasoline must be refined. Raw petroleum is pumped out of the ground as crude oil that's composed of a stew of hydrocarbon chains of various lengths. These chains vaporize at different temperatures, with the shorter, lighter

chains going gaseous first. At the refinery the crude is distilled and the various chain lengths are boiled off and collected. They run the gamut from gases like propane to solids like paraffin, with the volatile liquids that make up gasoline residing near the middle of the range. On average, a barrel of crude oil (42 gallons) yields about 21 gallons of gasoline.

There are currently 139 refineries operating in the US, and those facilities are responsible for providing the base fuel that's sold to various retailers and distributed to the nation's 160,000 or so service stations. "The base gas is shared among marketers," says Jim Macias, fuel technology manager at Shell. "It has to meet very stringent industry standards, so the quality is good."

It's what's added to this fungible base stock that differentiates the gas that's sold at a name-brand station versus what you pump at the no-name quickie mart on the corner. In addition to government-mandated detergents (as well as ethanol, but we'll get to that next month) intended

to reduce tailpipe emissions by keeping engine internals clean, many companies blend their own additive package into the tanker trucks before they depart for the service station.

These chemical cleaners cost money to develop and produce (and market), and not every retailer pours in the same amount. The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) has a minimum concentration, and "about 50 percent of the market only puts in the minimum," Macias says. "But we've found that amount to be ineffective in keeping the engine clean." Many auto manufacturers agree, which is how the so-called Top Tier gas standard came to be.

Top Tier fuels contain a higher concentration of detergent additives (2.5 times more at minimum for all grades of gas) and are free of metallic additives that can damage catalytic converters. Some 30 retailers in the US have jumped on the Top Tier bandwagon (see [toptiergas.com](http://toptiergas.com) for a list) since the standard was introduced in 2004.

“When so much concern is fixed to your bike’s performance, how much do you know about the flammable liquid that makes it all happen?”

So there’s a difference in additive concentrations among retailers, but even after you decide on a brand you still have to make a decision at the pump: regular, mid-grade, or premium?

Octane is the main difference between the three grades of gas. Octane is a family of hydrocarbons, but it’s more commonly used as shorthand for octane rating, the index of a fuel’s ability to resist detonation. Detonation, or “engine knock,” is when the air/fuel mixture in the combustion chamber ignites spontaneously ahead of the normal, uniform flame propagating from the spark plug. (That is, *after* the spark plug has fired. A spontaneous burn *before* the plug fires is called preignition and occurs as the result of a hot spot within the combustion chamber, often a piece of carbon.) Detonation creates a massive pressure spike in the combustion chamber that manifests itself as a ringing sound as the engine literally resonates from the shock. Detonation is bad news. It hammers the piston and can pit the piston crown, crack ring-lands, and do all sorts of other nasty stuff.

The octane rating of a gas is determined in a laboratory using a single-cylinder “knock” engine with a variable compression ratio. Technicians run the engine on a test gas and increase the compression ratio until knock occurs and then compare the results to pure octane, which has an octane rating of 100. Two different tests are employed when settling on an octane rating, the Research Octane Number (RON) and Motor Octane Number (MON). The tests follow slightly different parameters, and in the end neither is used as the sole indicator of knock resistance. Instead, the two numbers are averaged to get the fuel’s Anti-Knock Index (AKI), which is the number you see at the pump. The equation  $(R+M)/2$  is even visible below the octane number.

So which number should you go with? Whatever your bike’s manufacturer calls for. But a higher-octane gas is better, right? No, at least not in terms of power or throttle response. A higher octane rating, by itself, does not increase engine power *unless* it prevents detonation. If an engine does not experience detonation on 87-octane fuel, it won’t make more power or run any better on 91.

But as far as keeping your engine clean, premium gas has “the highest concentration of the good stuff,” Macias says of Shell’s premium gas. “It has five times the cleaning agents required by the EPA.” The idea here is that a vehicle engineered to run on high-octane gas is likely built to a higher state of tune, so internal cleanliness is essential for proper performance. So if you frequent the quickie mart for discount gas, the occasional tank of premium from a name-brand station may do your engine some good.

We’ve never heard of anybody intentionally running their bike on a lower-than-specified-octane gas, but what if you had no choice? “Keep the revs down and listen for detonation,” says Brad Puetz, Kawasaki’s media relations supervisor. And if you hear that telltale pinging, pull over and let the engine cool down.

Check back next month to learn about ethanol, stale gas, and fuel stabilizers.

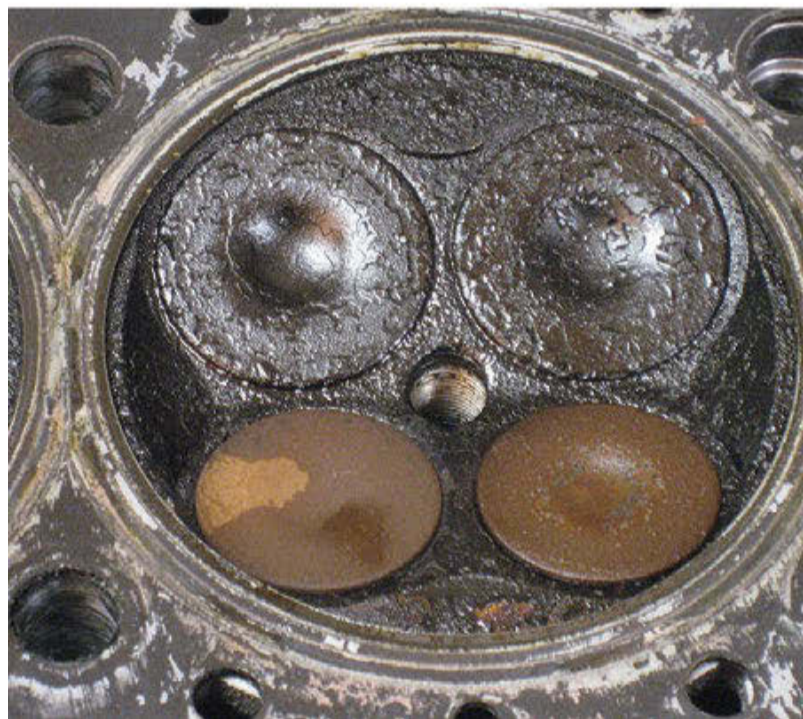
—Ari Henning



PULSTAR

## BIG BANG vs. PROGRESSIVE BURN

When most folks think about combustion, they assume that when the spark plug fires the air-fuel mixture inside the combustion chamber explodes all at once like a firecracker. In reality, it’s a controlled burn that originates at the spark plug and progresses toward the cylinder walls. The image above was taken inside the combustion chamber of a test engine and shows the “flame kernel” expanding from the plug 13,707 microseconds (call it 0.014 of a second) after ignition.



BILL WENGER

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE A DEPOSIT?

**Gas companies make a big deal about engine deposits, and plenty of aftermarket chemical companies sell potions intended to purge your engine of sediments. So what are these residues made of, and where do they come from?**

Colloquially known as “gunk,” the black deposits found on intake valves and piston crowns are primarily carbon. This crud accrues as gas vapor breaks down as a result of coming into contact with hot engine parts. It can also form as the result of excessive oil in the combustion chamber—from leaky rings or worn valve seals or guides. Carbon deposits impede gas flow, just like cholesterol buildup slows the flow of blood through your heart.




Ken Condon



RICH LEE

## RISK VERSUS REWARD

 Riding a motorcycle is risky. No kidding. Since the day we first uttered the word “motorcycle,” concerned friends and loved ones made every attempt to shoot down any hope of a future that included riding. They would eagerly share cautionary tales of ill-fated friends of friends who were foolish enough to straddle a “donor-cycle.”

Public opinion is that riding a motorcycle is motorized Russian roulette. While it’s surely not that risky, riding does stand out as an activity that goes against all manner of common sense. Which begs the question, “Why the heck do we do it?”

At least part of the answer lies in our perception that the risk is worth the reward. The reward can be the feeling of freedom and being fully alive or the satisfaction of mastering the unique challenges riding offers. Living life to the fullest and conquering challenges is great, but is it really worth the risk? Motorcyclists aren’t the type to shy away from a reasonable amount of risk. And while some are willing to risk more than others, none has a death wish.

Risk is like gravity—it’s ever-present and we always have to manage it. But unlike gravity, we can choose the amount of risk we are exposed to and act to minimize the risk that remains. Being a

risk-management expert is a worthy goal because, if you haven’t figured it out by now, motorcycling is not forgiving of ignorance or even mediocrity. Which is why it behooves you to learn risk-reduction strategies and advanced control skills.

You might be like a lot of riders who think their skills are just fine, but a mere absence of crashes does not give you an accurate measure of your ability to handle truly life-threatening situations. For example, many people learn that their cornering or braking skills aren’t up to snuff when they are faced with a particularly complex event that they either fail to manage or barely survive. Let’s take a look at three general areas of improvement that can tip the risk/reward ratio in your favor.

**Become a smarter rider.** Plenty of people muddle through their first years on two wheels going from one near miss to another. It’s tempting to write off these close calls as the cost of riding a motorcycle, but what these riders don’t realize is that riding smarter nearly erases these unpleasant run-ins. Learning strategies for predicting and mitigating potential hazards will reduce the number of sphincter-puckering moments while improving your riding experience.

**Be the master of your machine.** Learn to corner, brake, shift, and accelerate until you can do so with the utmost control and precision. Advanced rider training courses conducted in a parking lot are a great way to get the ball rolling, but your training is not yet complete until you put these lessons into practice at real-world speeds. You can go a long way on your own, but it’s safer and faster to learn from a professional instructor, whether that’s on the street or at a racetrack.

**Evaluate your behavior and attitude.** Even well-developed strategies and control skills are no match for poor judgment or carelessness. It’s great to have cornering and braking prowess, but don’t assume having killer chops suddenly exempts you from responsible riding. Poke the tiger too hard and not even MotoGP-level talent will be enough to keep you from careening into the side of a minivan. You can choose to ignore the hazards and limits of the places you ride, but you do so at your own peril.

You choose to ride even knowing you can get hurt or killed. But with a bit of effort to advance your skills you can reap all of the rewards while reducing the risk of becoming the subject of one of those cautionary tales.

# BE COOL BE SEEN

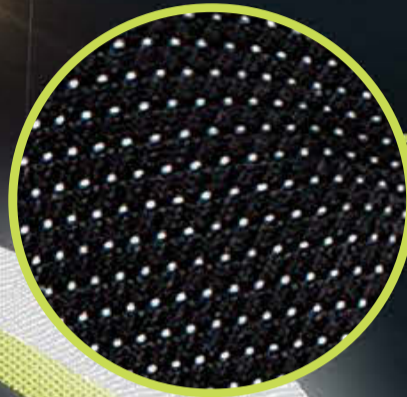
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# TERMS, CONDITIONS, AND TWO WHEELS

## The Ins and Outs of Motorcycle Warranties



Give some grizzled riders half a chance, and they'll bend your ear forever about motorcycle failures in the bad old days. Seized engines. Holed pistons. Transmissions or rear drives suddenly locked up.

Not so much anymore. Overall quality of motorcycles has progressed hugely over the past decades, and warranty issues crop up far less often. So why do manufacturers offer warranties? And should you need to pursue a warranty issue, what might you want to know ahead of time?

First off, understand that written warranties are not required by law. Warranties are an extra-value sales tool, used by manufacturers to foster buyer confidence with a promise to stand behind the product. However, once that promise is extended, written warranties in the US become bound by law—the Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act, to be specific. Passed by Congress in 1975, Magnuson-Moss not only ensures full access to warranty information, but it also allows consumers to comparison-shop warranties, encourages warranty competition, and promotes quick

and complete fulfillment of warranty obligations.

In real life, the fruits of Magnuson-Moss can be seen as online warranty descriptions and three- or five-year warranties attached to deluxe-model bikes instead of the one-year factory warranties on run-of-the-mill motorcycles. Also, you may be offered extended service contracts—sometimes called “extended warranties”—at time of purchase. But true warranties are included in the price of the product, while service contracts are separate, cost-extra products.

In general, warranties cover mechanical failures resulting from defects in materials or factory workmanship under normal use, so the purchaser will not incur out-of-pocket costs. Wear items such as tires, batteries, bulbs, chains or drive belts, clutch plates, spark plugs, filters, etc. are not covered. Should you sell your motorcycle, the warranty transfers to the new owner, assuming that the coverage period has not expired and you've complied with all terms and conditions of the warranty.

Ahh—terms and conditions. This is

where things might get crosswise. In truth, the typical terms and conditions of a warranty are quite reasonable and should serve a prudent rider well. The fact that you're reading this magazine indicates you have an interest in the sport, want to learn more about motorcycling, and will likely care for your two-wheeled pride and joy—as opposed to those who will purposely thrash their bikes then cry “foul” and try to finagle free fixes under warranty.

Usually, the warranty only applies if: the bike has been fully assembled and set to manufacturer's operating specifications by an authorized dealer; the owner has followed proper break-in and storage procedures; the owner can provide record of maintenance having been performed as recommended; and the odometer has not been altered. In addition, a warranty will not cover the repair of damage resulting from owner abuse, lack of proper maintenance, or neglect.

Double ahh—abuse or neglect. This is where perceptions might run wild. But you can usually identify abuse and neglect when you see it. Most manufacturers list: racing or competition use;

modification of original parts; abnormal strain; use of improper lubricants, oils, fuel and fuel additives; improperly installed accessories; use of non-factory parts or accessories; damage as a result of accidents or collisions; water submersion; and use of the motorcycle after discovery of a defect.

In short, if you properly maintain your stock motorcycle and correctly add factory-approved accessories, manufacturers will stand behind their products. As well they should. If you add an aftermarket exhaust to boost power and noise, re-flash your ECU,

*"In truth, the typical terms and conditions of a warranty are quite reasonable and should serve a prudent rider quite well."*

swap camshafts, or perform other such changes, you're on your own. (This doesn't mean you *will* be denied warranty coverage, but you *could* be.) You might be tempted to put the bike back to stock after a failure, but even an entry-level dealership tech can tell the difference between bolts untouched from factory assembly versus those that have been twirled off and on again.

Still and all, nobody's perfect. Perhaps one of the people who assembled your motorcycle had a bad Monday because his dog died over the weekend. Stuff happens, and we're all human. Manufacturers understand that and will stand behind their products. Modern motorcycles have grown to become very reliable machines, but there are plenty of riders who will never look at the drive chain, change the engine oil, or even attempt to locate the air filter.

Some of the truisms spouted by those grizzled veteran riders still hold today, including, "Take care of your bike and it will take care of you." And should you need an extra bit of help, check out your bike's warranty.

—Ken Lee

Chris Fillmore  
KTM / HMC  
Racing

Photo: Brian Nelson



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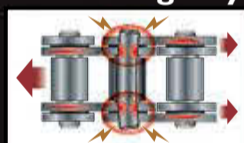
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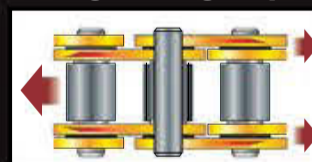
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## MC GARAGE → ANSWERS

### AIR SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM

**Q** I'm a first-time Harley owner this year and, for the most part, am quite pleased. But among its many newly discovered "Harley-isms," my 2014 Ultra Limited has this wonky air-ride suspension that I just haven't sorted out. When I asked the dealer's techs about suspension setup I feel like they looked at me cross-eyed and walked away.

So here's my question: Do I have to pump this up every time I load the bags for a trip then dump pressure for commuting? Why can't we just use springs? I know the "click-click" of preload, compression, and rebound. This pneumatic whiz-bang gadget just has a nipple. I would love an MC explanation.

Dillan Masellas / York, ME



**A** When this question came up, MC's Road Test Editor Ari Henning raised his hand to answer it:

"If you're loading the saddlebags and the top case, yeah, you should probably pump up the shocks to help maintain chassis attitude and thus handling and ground clearance. Check the owner's manual to see what pressures H-D recommends for your weight.

"Pumping up the shocks for a weekend ride and then bleeding them down for Monday's commute might sound like a pain, but I'd be willing to bet it's quicker and easier than turning the collars on a pair of spring shocks, which on your bike would require removing the saddlebags.

"Part of the appeal of air shocks is that

they can be made to handle a wide range of loads with just a few strokes of the pump. The air is the spring, and by forcing more air into the shock you're making a stouter spring. The other benefit is that air shocks have a very progressive rate, which is important on a bike with such limited suspension travel."

One final thought. Air springs aren't a new gadget. For many years, manufacturers used air to supplement steel springs as a way to fine-tune the suspension. Even for Harley, this is nothing new.

—Jerry Smith

#### YOUR TURN!

We know you have a question you're just dying to ask, so send it to us already at:  
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## LET'S MAKE A DEAL!



As a dealership, our goal is to flip our inventory several times before the new models are released. As momentum grows behind any new model or rumors swirl of potential changes coming, sales can stall on some current inventory. Also, there are usually several models in any lineup that just don't get the attention they deserve. Slow-moving or non-moving units not only take up precious and profitable floor space, but the longer a bike sits without being sold, the more a dealership pays in interest to floor this unit. Time is money.

Dealers need to carry a wide range of motorcycles to satisfy all interests and skill levels, so it's not unusual for a shop to have a half-dozen bikes in inventory with little or no attention paid to them. Not that any of these units are horrible; in fact it can be quite the opposite. They just don't grab the attention of the average customer. Popularity among the masses, demographics, price, and even color can create a non-profitable dust collector. So what are we going to do about this?

**1/** As you explain to me the kind of bike you're looking for, I'm going to steer you toward some of these models as long as it is somewhat to your liking. I'm going to amaze you with its features and benefits and ask you to sit on it. See? It's not so bad. I will discuss with you why this motorcycle can be a great alternative to others in its class, and if nothing else I will show that you have choices.

**2/** I will explain the advantages of buying this particular bike over comparable makes and models based on its attributes and/or price. I need to get customers to notice these units. Your friends have already expressed their opinions, and this is a pretty powerful persuader. What we're showing you isn't a bad motorcycle; it's an option. Why be like the rest? Why not ride something a little different, and, hey, you might even like it! *Oh, and we'll make you a deal.*

**3/** Speaking of making deals. If you can't get your head around the color or the seat and handlebar configuration, we'll help you out. We'll negotiate the price, give you a little more for your trade, or even service it so you can take it for a test ride. I know, I know, test rides are hard to get,

but we are more likely to make an exception here. Maybe we'll share the cost of those new bars and seat or give you an in-store credit to do with as you wish. You want a bike and we need to sell this bike, so what do you think? (And besides, the color might be growing on you.)

Have you looked around your local dealer's showroom lately? I mean really looked around? Your next new motorcycle might be the one you least expect, and it might be the best deal on the floor. When you're in the market for a brand-new bike, it can be hard to decide which way to go, so go in with an open mind.

*Jeff Maddox is the sales manager for a multiline dealership in the Midwest. Questions for him? Email us at [mcmall@bonniercorp.com](mailto:mcmall@bonniercorp.com).*



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# MOTOR CYCLIST

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## MC GARAGE

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## Product Comparo: Bohn Armor Pants vs Kevlar Jeans

ActionStations Boss Paul English talks about the differences in lower body protection options.

**Kevlar reinforced jeans are popular with riders of all kinds of bikes.**

**Draggin Jeans were among the first on the market, and there are now many similar versions available.**

**Many riders are interested in how these compare to the Bohn Pants.**



**Q: Paul, please explain the differences between Kevlar riding Jeans and the Bohn Pants.**

**PE:** In short kevlar has great abrasion resistance and is excellent for gravel rash when you're sliding down the road. With the Bohn System we're focusing more on Impact Protection - the vulnerable 'corners' you land on and damage - knees, hips, and elbows and shoulders with the shirts. An unprotected impact in these places can put you in the ER and off work. And hurts!

**Q: But won't your armor grind through in a wreck?**

**PE:** Actually in over 15 years, we've never seen our armor significantly damaged at all! This is because in a crash, we tend to bounce and slide, scrubbing the speed off.

**Q: The Bohn System has to be worn under jeans as an extra layer, isn't that hot and a hassle?**

**PE:** Positioning armor snugly against your body is the best way of providing comfortable and discrete protection so that it's in the right place if you have a fall. Yes, it's definitely an extra step compared to jeans - but on the other hand you can then wear your own jeans, or whatever pants you choose. It gives you a lot more options.

**Q: But isn't it hot?**

**PE:** The only time you notice the Bohn Pants being hot is in the heat of the summer when you're a standstill, say sitting on your bike at a light. At that time of year everything's hot! Otherwise they breathe really well in all seasons; and we do have options of a mesh shell material and also a winter thermal solution.

**Q: What about putting armor into kevlar jeans?**

**PE:** Some companies do have this option, which on first impressions is a good idea. But what actually happens is the armor 'flops' around the outside of your leg as it's attached to the jeans - so you can imagine that it won't be in the right place if you actually do hit the ground.

**Q: So do I need to upsize your jeans for the Bohn Pants?**

**PE:** Surprisingly most people find that their existing regular-fit, or relaxed jeans fit perfectly over the Adventure Pants - that's because the armor mainly fits where your jeans are loose.

**Q: Don't the Bohn Pants make your jeans look bulky?**

**PE:** No one can see you have anything but your jeans on!

**Q: And you make armored shirts too?**

**PE:** We think of the pants and shirts as 'A System' that protects you without having to wear full armored gear - specially in the heat.

**Q: So what's the best choice?**

**PE:** As a lifelong rider myself - I love to have choices in bikes, accessories and gear. Many riders are happy with kevlar jeans, and most are very well made.

We're proud of the Bohn Adventure Pants and the amazing customer reports we get, but everyone has different priorities.

**My suggestion is to give us a try - we've a great Can't-Lose 90 Day Trial Offer! And they're made in the USA too.**



The Bohn Bodyguard System

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## OUTSIDE VIEW

**There's nothing better** than cruising with the guys on the weekend. Been doing the same for years and it never gets old - there's always something going on or a place to go. And this is how we ride, jeans and denim jacket - unless it's winter anyway.

But now we wear this Bohn gear underneath. Yes it's underneath! You can't see it, and we can't feel it.

I just feel happier when I have some protection these days, though I'm sure we're not going to have a spill.

Check it out - read their testimonials - that's what I did.

And they give you a 90 Day Trial too.

Riding seems much more stressfull these days and with this gear we can

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.... terrific product.

I crashed at 70mph last weekend and I was barely injured. Your knee pads worked perfectly to cushion the impact. I have some swelling and road rash but not a single fracture. Thank you most sincerely.

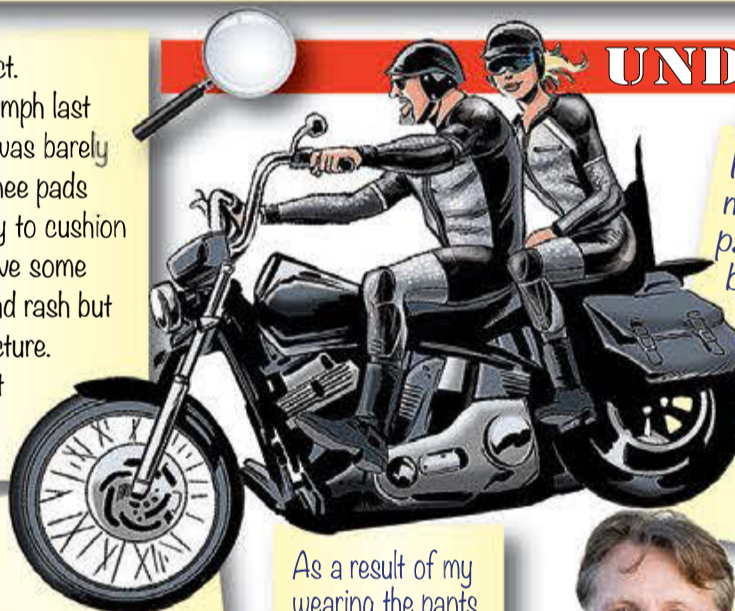
They are very comfortable, I forget I even have them on, fit great, and it's great knowing I have the protection under my jeans. Thanks so much.

...your product has made a believer out of me and the select few who ..saw my kamikaze flight through the air. I can only imagine the numerous injuries that luckily avoided by wearing the armor.

**Free Bonus for you to keep, just for trying! LIMITED PROMO**



## UNDERNEATH



I am happy to report my bohn armored pants helped save my butt in a crash this past week-end. Thanks, great product consider this a testimonial to their effectiveness

As a result of my wearing the pants I was at work bright and early Monday

...the road littered with gravel...I walked away without a scratch, the bike was not so lucky. I just wanted to say thank you and let you know that your product saved me a lot of pain

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## CLEAN A CARBURETOR

 The fuel systems on older carbureted bikes require regular maintenance. This includes tending to the petcock, fuel filters, fuel lines, and the carburetor(s). This month's *How To* walks you through the process of cleaning a carburetor.



**1** Drain the carburetor and remove it from the bike. This might require displacing the airbox. Take note of hose and cable routing. Look for dry, stiff, or cracked flanges on the intake and the airbox, and replace anything that looks suspicious.



**2** Clean any grime from the exterior of the carburetor with a soft brush and an aerosol carb cleaner then remove the screws that secure the float bowl to the bottom of the carb. If the float bowl is stuck in place, give it a firm tap with the handle of your screwdriver.



**3** The float bowl may be full of gunk and scale. (This one, ironically, was spotless.) Clean out the bowl with a brush or by scraping the deposits with a pick or small screwdriver. Really thick or stubborn deposits could require submersion in a stronger chemical cleaner, often available at auto parts stores.



**4** Remove the float by pulling the hinge pin. Inspect the float needle and shake the float—any liquid inside is evidence of a leak and necessitates replacement. Inspect the slide piston for wear, and on constant-velocity carbs check the rubber diaphragm for tears or damage, and replace if necessary.



**5** Remove the jets. The main jet is in the center and the pilot jet (sometimes a non-removable fixed unit) is the smaller one next to it. Seat the air screw—noting the number of turns to closed—and then remove it.



**6** Spray cleaner through the jets *and* the orifices they screw into.



**7** The bores of the jets and all emulsion holes must be clear. Remove any stubborn obstructions with an appropriate item. The kinky bristle from a brass brush is ideal for this purpose. Do not use drill bits to clean jets.



**8** Give all the parts a final rinse with carb cleaner and reassemble the carburetor. Make sure to reset the air screw to its original position. Reinstall, add gas, and go for a ride!



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**September 11 - 13**

New Jersey Motorsports Park

\* Schedule Subject to Change

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## ZERO S

WRIST: Ari Henning  
MSRP (2015): \$17,840  
MILES: 401  
MPG: Ha!  
MODS: None



UPDATE  
01

No gas cap here! There used to be a "frunk," but the optional Power Tank now takes its place. The 2.8-kWh module fits the 2014 and 2015 S, SR, and DS and adds a claimed 34/17 city/highway miles to the bike's range.



FRESH MEAT!

BRIAN MACLEAN

When the boss suggested we toss a Zero S electric bike into the long-term mix, I volunteered. The way I see it, my short commute is the ideal scenario for a range-restricted eBike, and as a dyed-in-the-wool motorcyclist I'm the right guy to give this bike a straight-forward evaluation based entirely on its merits (keeping in mind the Zero's inherent limitations, just like I would when testing a cruiser or a scooter or any other bike). It's clear that tech junkies and environmentalists are excited about eBikes, but will a Zero satisfy the needs and desires of a traditional petrol head? I'm willing to find out.

Zero's lineup has an overall higher spec this year. This latest batch of battery bikes come with upgraded power packs, more sophisticated suspension, stronger brakes, and better tires.

The S pictured above is the naked sportbike in Zero's range, a roster that also includes the DS, FX, and SR. The DS is an off-road-capable all-rounder (see "Coal vs. Solar," Sept. 2014, *MC*), while the FX is a lithe little urban hooligan bike, and the SR is a high-performance version of the S with a more robust motor controller that dishes out more power and torque. (The motor is also upgraded to handle additional heat.)

Zero sells the S in several battery configurations. The base bike has a 9.4 kWh battery that's said to offer a 113/58-mile city/highway range. This bike came equipped with the popular 12.5 kWh-pack upgrade (\$2,000), plus the optional 2.8-kWh Power Tank that costs \$2,496, and takes the place of the Zero's "frunk," or forward trunk. Range as equipped is stated at 185/94 city/highway, though that highway figure is measured at 70 mph, a good 5 or 10 mph below the pace of smooth-flowing Orange County traffic. Power is listed as 54 hp and 68 pound-feet of torque.

As shown, this is a \$17,840 motorcycle. The base bike is a spendy \$13,345, with all those battery upgrades adding expense, heft, and charging time in addition to range. Balanced on our scales the bike is 452 pounds. That's not especially heavy, but given the bike's compact size (about 90 percent the size of a Triumph Street Triple R) it feels quite dense. I sure hope I never run out of juice and have to push this thing home!

So far I've ridden the Zero to and from work three days with a few errands thrown in—racking up about 65 miles total—on a single charge. When I got home on the third day I plugged the bike in (with 14 percent battery remaining) and

it was fully charged the next morning. It's clear the Zero will work wonderfully as a daily rider.

So how is it to ride? Fine. It's not especially dynamic or exciting, but as utilitarian transportation it's excellent. There's no need to warm up the motor (incidentally, there's also no discernible motor heat on warm days—a nice bonus) and no need to shift gears since it's a direct-drive setup. And there is definitely something to be said for never having to detour to a gas station on my way to or from work.

The bike has three drive modes—Eco, Sport, and Custom—and I've ridden it almost exclusively in Sport simply because I like to go fast. Once underway, acceleration is impressive. It'll squirt from 50 to 70 mph in an instant, but off-the-line performance is pretty soft, akin to a 250cc scooter and not quite fast enough to keep lead-footed autos at bay. I can manipulate the Custom ride mode from my iPhone with the free Zero app, so I'm looking forward to exploring that and hopefully dialing up the initial power.

I'm also looking forward to taking the S on some twisty roads to test the handling. The Zero is excellent for commuting, but that's only part of the equation for the typical motorcyclist.

## Indian Scout

WRIST: Brian Hatano

MSRP (2015): \$11,299

MILES: 4,795

MPG: 43

MODS: ECU calibration,  
sound check



BRIAN HATANO

Shortly after last month's dyno run (see *Doin' Time*, May, MC), the Scout was called in for the update that would solve the issue of a low-fuel warning light that was failing to warn—a problem limited to pre-production bikes like my long-term. While the update was being performed, I had the fleet center perform the recommended ECU calibration for the Straights slip-on exhaust. As soon as the bike was returned we rolled it onto our dyno.

The results: 87.6 hp at 7,900 rpm with 64.9 pound-feet of torque at 3,400 rpm. The numbers were virtually identical to the baseline 88 hp at 7,800 rpm and 64.8 pound-feet at 5,850 rpm. No huge increase to brag about here (though the reflash seemed to help smooth out an off-idle stumble on acceleration), but let's be honest: We weren't really going for more power with this mod. It was all about that sound.

Passing under the radar for noise might not be a top priority depending on where you live, but here in Southern California, several local police departments are sticklers about bikes with loud pipes. So to make sure the Scout's louder bark would not attract undue attention, I broke out our digital sound meter to get a reading on decibels per J2825 standard.

J2825 was established by the Motorcycle Industry Council (MIC) and Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) as a test procedure that can be conducted in the field with consistent results. The procedure, which is supported by the AMA, uses a calibrated sound meter positioned 20 inches away from the exhaust outlet at a 45-degree angle. The test must be conducted in an open area with a minimum 8 feet of unobstructed space all around. The sound limits are as follows: All motorcycles must not exceed 92 dBA at idle; motorcycles with fewer than three or more than four cylinders are limited to 96 dBA at 2,000 rpm; motorcycles with three or four cylinders are limited to 100 dBA at 5,000 rpm.

We performed a baseline sound test on the Scout that registered 83 dBA with stock mufflers then swapped to the Straights slip-ons and re-ran the test. The exhaust tone deepened noticeably but still measured well below the J2825 limits: 85 dBA at idle and 88 dBA at two grand.

With the Indian logo clearly visible on the top muffler and a healthier but still-compliant sound, the Indian Straights are a good choice if you want to keep your mods factory and hassle-free. Coming up, we'll experiment with a Trask 2-into-1 exhaust and an aftermarket tuning module.



Photo: Troy Markels. Photographer: Tracy Stiehr 9/5/09

## GEAR

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Starting with this issue, we're going to condense the print coverage of our long-term bikes slightly. But we're also going to greatly increase the size and frequency of those reports on our website. So go to [motorcyclistonline.com](http://motorcyclistonline.com) and find the Long Term Test Bikes under the MC Garage tab.

## Suzuki V-Strom 1000 ABS

WRIST: Marc Cook  
MSRP (2014): \$12,699  
MILES: 10,478  
MPG: 40  
MODS: Windscreen(s)



UPDATE  
06



These small brackets connect the flat-facing Suzuki windscreen mounts to the curved CalSci Shorty screen.



I like the appearance of the CalSci Shorty screen better than the Suzuki piece, and overall coverage is quite similar. I'd rate the CalSci as providing less turbulence, but it has to be in the second angle "notch" to get the coverage. (The V-Strom's mounts tilt in three steps, plus you can place the screen to one of three heights; all of these screens were in the lowest holes.) I think that's because the Suzuki screen has a flip at the top that the CalSci does not. I rode briefly with the \$185 Large screen, but it's so tall that I'm looking through or just below the top edge, which is a deal killer for me. If you're accustomed to looking through

I'm playing with windshields. I'd used the Suzuki accessory windscreen before with good results, but California Scientific ([calsci.com](http://calsci.com)) sent me a couple of different options to try.

First was the Shorty (\$140) whose top edge is approximately 2 inches higher than stock. The CalSci Shorty is even wider than the Suzuki accessory screen at the bottom and extends farther below the mounting brackets. It's narrower at the top by 2.5 inches.

glass, you'll love the taller screen for its tremendous coverage.

The only fly in the CalSci ointment is the attachment scheme. Suzuki's stock mounts are flat across the front of the bike, but the CalSci screens all have a natural arc. You can either accept that the screws run through the screen at an unsightly angle or use the optional brackets that fit between the screen and the bike. Using the brackets moves the screen forward and creates marginally more turbulence for me. So far, no perfect answer.

The Blue Bagger now wears a pair of new Screamin' Eagle Nightstick 2-into-2 Slip-On Mufflers (from your Harley dealer; \$500), along with a Screamin' Eagle

Ventilator Elite air cleaner (\$300). The new components meant the ECU had to be recalibrated (your dealer does the install), which compensates for the freer breathing.

For sound, the 'Sticks proved surprisingly low-key, adding just enough bass to the lows and a bit more crackle up top. Power? Stock, the Glide put out 71.5 peak hp and a max of 89.2 pound-feet of torque at 3,500 rpm. With the mods, horsepower nosed up to 73.2 and stays above stock right to 6,100 rpm. Peak



torque is down fractionally, though it also hangs around longer.

But as I rumbled onto the freeway on-ramp, pipe in full song, I had to admit the new 'Sticks sounded better than the stockers, with just enough low-end rumble to make for a pleasantly thumping difference.

## Harley-Davidson Road Glide Special

UPDATE  
05



WRIST: Andy Cherney  
MSRP (2015): \$23,699  
MILES: 8,495  
MPG: 40  
MODS: Slip-on mufflers

I finally got to the bottom of the 1290's deepest secret: free play in the rear hub assembly. Long story short, I was able to get two KTM representa-

tives to measure it in the *Motorcyclist* shop, as well as explain how much play is tolerable within the specification and how dealers will handle concerns about the issue. The allowable play is 0.3mm (my 1290 displayed much less than that when measured), and if the hub is measured as being out of spec, KTM will replace the parts. The play in the assembly is noticeable, and it does feel odd, but I've never sensed anything while riding. Our Super Duke R has been through two track tests and more than 10,000 miles of testing and never had a mechanical issue of any kind. More photos and details about the 1290's rear wheel are available at [motorcyclistonline.com](http://motorcyclistonline.com).

## KTM 1290 Super Duke R

UPDATE  
11



WRIST: Zack Courts  
MSRP (2014): \$16,999  
MILES: 13,803  
MPG: 37  
MODS: Hub free-play check



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## 1991–2002 HONDA ST1100

Among motorcyclists, many of whom believe cars are boring and soulless, the term “automotive” as applied to a bike is a slam of epic proportions. Depending on the job at hand, however, a bit of car-ness is a good thing. If, for example, it’s pouring rain and you’re three states from home, there’s a good chance you’ll forgive your bike its lack of charisma as long as it gets you home without drama. In a situation like that you could do a lot worse than to be sitting on a Honda ST1100.

The ST’s 1,085cc longitudinal V-4 churned out 100 hp and 79 pound-feet of torque and was tougher to kill than a cockroach—with minimal maintenance most would easily reach 100,000 miles without a whimper. A bank of four carbs nestled between the vee of the cylinders, accessible by removing the dummy tank cover; the real gas tank was under the seat and held 7.4 gallons, enough to put almost 300 miles behind you at a stretch. The shaft drive produced a bit of hop under hard acceleration, but the bike’s heft—635 pounds dry, according to Honda—damped some of it.

The chassis was built for comfort, not for speed, though the ST would hustle down a back road if prodded. Twin front discs worked with a single rear to slow the beast, and optional ABS and traction control added to the feeling of security; 1996-and-later ABS

models came with linked brakes. A pair of detachable saddlebags and a big fairing fulfilled the “touring” part of the sport-touring formula.

The stock windscreen made few friends; most riders shelved it for an after-market screen. Some riders liked the stock seats, while others phoned their favorite custom-seat makers immediately. The low handlebar was often replaced by one a bit higher and wider. In 1996, Honda replaced the problematic 28-amp alternator with an improved 40-amp unit, making the later models the way to go if you add a lot

of power-sucking electrical gadgets. The early models can be upgraded, but it’s not a simple bolt-on operation.

Valve-adjust intervals are long (16,000 miles), but the timing belt should be replaced every 80,000 miles; fudge that figure and you risk an engine full of bent valves. The coolant hoses on some high-mileage bikes get brittle and crack, and they’re under the carb bank so they’re a major pain to replace; the speedo cable and headlight bulbs aren’t much fun either. In the rain the bike throws a lot of splash up under the rear end, which is hidden by the bags; check the rear brake caliper, the mufflers, and the underside of the swingarm for rust and corrosion.

The ST1100 might be dated by today’s standards, but it benefits from an extremely loyal and knowledgeable fan

**CHEERS**  
Tough, solid, reliable, will get you there and back. Automotive, in a good way.

**JEERS**  
Weight, glitchy early alternators, odd-size tires. No amount of tinkering will turn it into a BMW.

**WATCH FOR**  
Undercarriage rust, sticky rear brake caliper, timing belt past its change-by date.

**VERDICT**  
For sport-tourers who prefer function over flash, the ST1100 still delivers.

**VALUE**  
1991 / \$2,485  
1993 / \$2,605  
1995 / \$2,975  
1997 / \$3,250  
1999 / \$3,620  
2001 / \$4,160  
2002 / \$4,555

## ALSO SMART...



### 1998–2003 DUCATI ST2

Perhaps the anti-ST1100, the sport-touring ST2 borrowed the Paso’s liquid-cooled, two-valve engine, bumped it up to 944cc, and wrapped it in much less controversial bodywork. Charming, quick, and good handling; it needed to be, given Ducati’s reputation for reliability at the time.



### 1986–2006 KAWASAKI CONCOURS 1000

No one expected the original Ninja 900R to survive more than two decades, and it didn’t. But the bike’s basic engine carried over to the Concours 1000, which for 21 model years was Kawasaki’s sole sport-touring machine. Fast and sophisticated when new, it began to show its age by the end of the 1990s, replaced by the genuinely fast Concours 14.



### 2001–2012 YAMAHA FJR1300

Hard to imagine now, but Yamaha’s US arm wasn’t sure it could sell the FJR1300 here. Euro-styled sport-tourers had failed to sell in big numbers. So Yamaha made the first bike available on special order to hedge bets and see how demand went. It was strong from the start, guaranteeing a long life for the FJR. The core of the 2015 model is, amazingly, closely related to the original.

base, legendary reliability and longevity, and a typically bargain-basement price on the used market. Don’t be afraid to look at high-mileage examples as long as they don’t show any obvious signs of distress. Change the screen and get a better seat, and spend the money you save over a newer sport-tourer on several years of vacations.

—Jerry Smith

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## MEGAPHONE



Harley-Davidson positions the Street 750 as an entry-level urban cruiser. But with the right mindset, it's a touring bike too.

RONALD AHRENS

# STREET ESCAPE

Can Harley's Hip, Urban Street 750 Hack It on the Highway Too?

Some decisions are easy. For an early January journey from my current base near Palm Springs, California, to Phoenix then Las Vegas then St. George, Utah, and back, I looked first at my Volkswagen Jetta wagon with heated seats and then at the Mysterious Red Sunglo Harley-Davidson Street 750 parked beside it.

Would I rather be indulged or listen to the wind rush past my helmet? I found my saddlebags and loaded up.

There's no denying the first part of this trip, on Interstate 10, is dull, but the Street easily held 80 mph and had plenty of roll-on power if I wanted to nudge it up to 90. The only remaining questions concerned range and comfort. Boredom intensifies discomfort, so I shifted my torso ever more forward, thinking this was going to be a long trip. The low-fuel indicator lighting up sooner than expected was like an early Christmas present. In Tonopah I calculated fuel economy. Could 35 mpg be right? With just a 4.3-gallon tank, long-distance comfort wouldn't be a concern.

After a good night's sleep in Phoenix, I made my way to Vegas via Arizona Route 60. The chief attraction would be the forest of Joshua trees between Wickenburg and Wikieup, a sleepy trading post. As the road started uphill before Wickenburg, I saw a

sign indicating a photo point ahead on the left and thought, "Why not?" The crossover was just ahead. So I flicked the Street 750 onto the apron and got on the brakes.

But the apron was shorter than expected. Then I saw the gravel. Target fixation set in. I didn't even attempt to throw the bike into the open track that turned left. Instead, the front tire skidded, and I went down, feeling astonished at the implacability of physical forces, appalled at the grinding and crunching, and sick about dropping the Street on its Screamin' Eagle aftermarket pipe.

I bounced to my feet and hit the Street's kill switch. The bike was scraped but not broken. The turn signal had popped out of its stalk, but that was it. I popped it back into place. My left thumb had whacked the mirror and was already swelling, but I could still reach Vegas before dark.

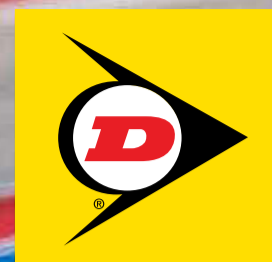
Finishing business and nursing my injuries, I left Vegas a few days later, eager to be back on the bike. If you don't mind scrubby vegetation, weird geography makes the ride across southeastern Nevada fascinating. Two rivers, the Muddy and the Virgin, flow almost side by side into the tail of Lake Mead. St. George is only 125 miles from the Vegas Strip, yet topographic and cultural shields make it seem like a different planet. The city hunkers

down inside a bowl of vermillion sandstone, with the brawny Pine Valley Range beating its own chest to the north.

Finally, on the last day of my journey, I retraced the course to Las Vegas and then made my way home through the Mojave National Preserve, 1.6 million acres of wondrous lava beds, sand dunes, and granite mountains. The nubbly road from Baker, on Interstate 15, leads through tortoise habitat to Kelso ghost town. Testifying to the heyday as a railroad stop and mining center, Kelso's restored depot serves as the Preserve's welcome center. From the Preserve's southern border, I covered the 18 miles to Amboy, on Old Route 66, and filled up once more before the final 90-mile stretch home.

I pulled into my driveway feeling halfway fresh. Fuel economy had improved to 41 mpg overall, but long stretches of desert encouraged stopping for gas at every opportunity. What bothered me most was the suspension's lack of compliance. Otherwise, my ambiguous feelings of the first day were transformed into a strong connection with the motorcycle; after this long run I accepted the Street's quirks. I unloaded my saddlebags with a feeling of accomplishment, proving to myself that the Street 750 isn't just for the street, but it works well on the highway too.

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